THE CULT OF DESIRE

AN INTERPRETATION OF EROTIC SCULPTURE OF INDIA



KANWAR LAL

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The sale of this book is strictly restricted to members of the medical and legal professions, and to scholars and research students of Indology, Psychology and Social Sciences.

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PREFACE

This essay on India's erotic sculpture is a part of a five-volume study of India's attitude to love and passion during several thousand years of her story; and my own preference would have been to publish all the parts together, in one volume, rather than issue them, as is being done now, in separate volumes. Put in perspective, the erotic sculpture of India is just one manifestation of a tremendous movement which started as a reaction to the Buddhist approach to Desire, and there is a danger that, viewed independently, the phenomenon may not be rightly appreciated and assessed.

I can, however, understand the Publisher's view of the matter. With the total scheme worked out in one book, the publication would again be as costly as 'Immortal Khajuraho' and be out of the reach of a majority of those students and scholars for whom the subject has special value and interest. Another reason why I agreed to publish this part separately is that the available material on this theme does not offer a consistant interpretation of the phenomenon. Indeed, most of the books dealing with this subject—and there are not many—are, in a sense, incomplete studies, for they do not take into account the fact that, full inventories of past achievement apart, erotic sculpture is still extant almost all over India. The usual method is to confine the study and the illustrations to Khajuraho and Konark and, may be, Bhubaneswar. This gives a distorted idea of the subject. I believe that there is a very obvious and commonsensical reason for the emergence of the erotic in religion, and for its amazingly rich display in Sculpture, where it is splashed to such an extent that it intrigues even modern minds which are, or ought to be, used to studies of sex in the freest vein. Correctly interpreted, the so-called erotic enigma is hardly an enigma, and I hope that this essay and the illustrations gathered here will show that it is a fairly simple and straight matter.

The plates have been selected from several different angles. In the first place, an attempt has been made to indicate the pan-Indian character of the movement which resulted in this prolific portrayal of the erotic in religious art. As it is, there are about thirty places which find representation between the covers of this book. Some of the plates will give an idea of the astonishing variety of the sexual poses and orgies depicted—whatever the reasons—on the sacred walls. A few are there to indicate the various stages of the love-play, from the first steps of wooing—through Nay, and reluctance, and turning round, and positive acceptance of the Yea—to consummation accompanied by as fanatic a delight and desire on the part of the wooed as on that of the wooer. Several pictures show the weather-beaten condition of the stone which is all but crumbling indicating, as it were, that desire also passes away with time, leaving behind the immensity of Nothingness, which, in almost all eastern religions, is neither less nor more than the all-pervading Himself. Some plates have been specially put in to bring out the sheer bliss which lights up the faces of the lovers. If the true explanation of the erotic sculpture of India lies in the Philosophy of *Mahasukh*, the Great Delight, then surely there could be no better proof of that than the radiance and joy writ across the countenances of the lovers. And, finally, all have been selected and arranged to help tell the story of the return of Woman and Love after Buddhism had tried to preach the gospel of renunciation of Desire and of vigorous curbing of the passions.

Of the pictorial element, nearly half the material has been made available through the courtesy of the Director-General, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi. The Publisher and the writer are sincerely grateful for this valuable help in the preparation of *The Cult of Desire*.

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"Delightful or disgusting, exalted or lowly, cruel or kind, obscure or refined, actual or imaginary, there is no subject that cannot evoke ras in man."

DASROOP

THE world has known for centuries past that part of the ornamentation on some of the ancient temples of India consists of highly erotic sculpture. Sailing along the eastern sea-coast of India, or stopping by the so-called Black Pagoda of Konark and the White one at Puri, the sailors of yore had heard or seen that which they could not but be puzzled by, and of which they could not but speak when they returned from this distant land to theirs. And the report was spread by these carriers of goods and tales that in contrast to their own chaster houses of God, the sanctuaries of the Hindus displayed passionate embraces, hot loves and 'curious matings of man and beast' :

"Strange, weird things that no man may say,
Things humanity hides away ;—
Secretly done,—
Catch the light of the living day,
Smile in the sun.
Cruel things that man may not name,
Naked here, without fear or shame,
Laugh in the carven stone."[1]

With that excitement which accompanies all talk on sex anywhere, and with a sense of bewilderment caused by finding that these obscenities had been carved on sacred surfaces, they must have discussed and debated the matter often. And it is possible that, as they voyaged by the light of the silent stars in their frail boats across lonely stretches of the vast ocean, they even mused over the implication of these carvings :

"What did they mean to the men who are long since dust ?
Whose fingers traced,
In this arid waste,
These rioting, twisted, figures of love and lust."[2]

Variations, on the theme and embellishments of the story they told, included the information that apart from the sculptural representation, sexual orgies, of both the natural and the unnatural sort, were practised in the temples as ritual. All this gave to places like Puri and Konark a fame, or, rather, notoriety, which has clung to them through the ages, and down to the present day. And, until recently, it was only of these two spots, and perhaps of Bhubaneswar which lies close by, in Orissa, that the world knew and made mention in terms of association with the erotic. Now, thanks to the rapid means of transport and communication which have reduced our planet to the dimensions of a peanut, it is common knowledge that in India there are several other sites showing 'loose loves carved on temples of stone'. Of these new finds, Khajuraho has received the greatest notice and all manner of publicity, audio-visual and literary. The reason for the excessive attention paid to the temples of this deserted village in Madhya Pradesh is that the place provides an abundance of erotic sculpture presented in an amazing array of poses, and, better still, the work is a thing of sheer grace and beauty. In a way, therefore, the problem is stated clearly and seen at one glance. If desire is bad and sex an evil, why is the female so attractive, the

male so inviting? And how can the lewd be so lovely, the sensual so delightful and the obscene so serene? Why, why is the deadly poison of passion—if poison it is—so nectar-sweet in taste?

Even so, all the eager interest of the world and the enthusiastic efforts of the agencies for travel and promoters of tourism have added just one more name—that of Khajuraho—to the list of the cities of Eros. Few people know that there are scores of other sites and places where temples with erotic carvings stand. Indeed, at one time the representation of the erotic was a common feature and a popular motif of temple-sculpture all over India. In the east of the country and in the west, and in the south and in the north, and in the central regions, and by the seashore and upon the hills, and in the bush as well as in the sands of the desert, temple after temple rose with sculpture after sculpture which posed, in plastic forms pulsating with such beauty and vigour that Nature might copy from Art, that eternal riddle, of Man's Passion and Desire, and, may be, sought to solve it too! Since countless, literally countless, temples, were razed to the ground by the Mohammedan invader and ruler—beginning with Mahmood of Ghazni and ending with Aurangzeb—innumerable temples like those of Khajuraho and Bhubaneswar have disappeared. In the north especially, not a trace remains of the glorious structures of which books of those times carry such glowing accounts. Excepting Nepal, the rest of the northern region was run over by the Iconoclast not once but several times over. Of the temples of Kashmir and the Punjab, of the ten thousand temples of Kanauj and the very large numbers at Mathura and Banaras, many of which might have been richer in this field than the extant examples, not one may be seen today. Again, the architectural trends and the religious movement which produced such work belong to the medieval age and earlier. Therefore, centuries of wilful neglect and natural processes of

decay have also removed a great deal of whatever was put up. Tradition has it that at Khajuraho itself there were eighty-five temples. Today, there is hardly a score of them. Thus, between the thief that is Time and the robber that is Man, only an insignificant portion of India's total erotic sculpture has been allowed to exist. Nevertheless, enough remains to indicate the ways of thoughts and the values of religion of the men who built these temples and carved such sculpture. What is more, these specimens are so widely scattered and their dates so well defined, that it is possible to construct the complete story of the why and wherefore of the erotic element found in the plastic decoration of India's holy edifices.

One look at a map of India, showing the places where temples with erotic sculpture may still be seen, will indicate that the movement which brought them into being was a Pan-Indian movement. In fact, it was a Pan-Asiatic movement, or, at least, one which covered all the areas where, during a certain period of time, Hinduism and Buddhism, especially the *Mahayan* school, held sway. The illustrations contained in this book cover as many as twenty-five places, and several more have not been directly represented, though there are references to them in the text. Ramgarh in Rajasthan; Modhera in Gujarat; Ajanta and Ellora and the Karle caves in Maharashtra; Aihole, Badami, Pattadakal, Srirangam, Kanchipuram, Belur, Vellore and that wondrous treasure-house of art, Nagarjunkonda in the South; Konark and Bhubaneswar in Orissa; and, of course, Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh—even these are enough to prove that the application of whatever motivated the artists of those days to sculpt sexual activity on temple walls, was confined to no particular region. There are other places, too, where passion, as wild and fierce as anywhere else, breathes upon the walls of the temples. Then, there are specimens from Bharhut, Sanchi and Mathura, Devgarh and Gwalior and so on. Indeed,

some of the places remain, in a sense, still undiscovered for neither the government nor the tourist has been able to, as yet, pay attention to them. Of such, there is a whole group of temples in Madhya Pradesh where the quality of work is inferior to that at Khajuraho, but is of the same type and trend. However, here we are not concerned with the artistic merit of the sculpture—though, and, as indicated already, some of the loveliest pieces of Indian sculpture belong to the category of the erotic—but with the philosophy and religion which prompted this work. It is the interpretation of the erotic sculpture of India which is the main concern of our study.

We said above that it was possible to build, from existing specimens, a complete story of how all this erotic sculpture came into being. In the pages that follow, an attempt will be made to spell out this story in some detail but let us indicate here its crux and kernel. Put briefly, it is this. Gautam, the Buddh, came, in his wisdom, to the conclusion that, in its essence, human life was pain and suffering and sorrow and emptiness; and that, to put it simply, not worth the trouble of living. The best that a man could aspire to was to get out of the cycle of birth and rebirth and to attain *Nirvan*. Whatever be the meaning of the term, *Nirvan*—and, as we shall see, this underwent change—it is clear that men should try to escape from the mesh of existence. That is the only way in which one can break through this vicious circle of being. Existence is brought about and bound by Desire, which, in turn, causes suffering and frustration and disillusionment. For, desire fulfilled and desire unfulfilled are equally full of pain for man. Since life is nothing but rot and decay, it is no use coming again and again to the world and going through the misery and hell of existence. Man must seek deliverance from it. Further, it is clear that Desire—*Kam*, Eros, Cupid, call it what you will—is the root of life, and, so far as man is concerned, woman is

its symbol. Therefore, she, Woman, stands for attachment to life, generally, and for passion, sexual desire which begets children and so keeps the process of procreation going, particularly. The Buddh's flight from home represents, among other things, his flight from woman. In his preaching, again and again, he not only deprecates women, but also advises his disciples to avoid them altogether. In the earlier years of Buddhism, women were not allowed to enter the fold, and it was only when he was dying that, after persistent pleading by his favourite disciple, Anand, he allowed women to take the vow. And even as he allowed this, he forecast that the *Dharm* would be severely affected and damaged thereby.

But whether woman is woe or joy, and life worth living or not, and passion, a way to hell or a road to release, so long as we live, neither the Buddh nor anyone else, howsoever wise and howsoever enlightened, can go against the laws of Nature. The right way in which Man can deal with Nature is to accept and understand her and to canalise the forces she represents. Anyhow, we cannot, just cannot, defy her, nor do aught against her rigorous rules. If the human world had to go on, it could go on only as a world of men and women. Women could not have been banished from the banquet of life—or this bed of thorns—just as men could not have been banished. Paradise was lost by Adam and Eve together, and had one remained there and the other come out, this world of ours would not have been. In so far as the Buddh and Buddhism tried to banish woman, they were trying to do something which was fore-doomed to failure. The story, which the erotic art of India and other countries, tells is that of the return of Woman, and then of the return of Sex. Now, a tremendously powerful reaction takes place whenever there is a tremendously powerful action which pushes the pendulum to any extreme. Then, in reaction, the pendulum is bound to swing to the other extreme and so extreme asceticism bred extreme eroticism. At one stage, temple after temple depicted

the entire range of the sexual act, and all manner of poses were portrayed—vulgar as vulgar can be, unnatural as unnatural can be, obscene as obscene can be, and indecent and shocking, disgusting and repulsive ! Only when things had been brought to this extreme was it possible for yet another reaction to set in, and a new religion, of Love without Passion, was born. And so it has gone on in India and in the world, and will go on. For not until things get *normalised*, can such chain-reactions ever come to a stop.

It is this tale, then, which is told in stone by what the world labels as the erotic sculpture of India. Starting around the third or second century B.C., the story was carried through nearly fifteen hundred years or more until it reached the end we have indicated above. As we shall see, there are nearly a score of explanations and interpretations connected with erotic sculpture. The loftiest of these links the erotic carvings with the noblest of human aims : merging of Soul with Self, of Man with God, and the attainment of that Joy from which life sprang and towards which it moves.[3] But this is the plain fact of the matter. And the moral of the story is that if life had to be lived—and in spite of his enlightenment which he attained at the age of thirty-six, and his theories notwithstanding, Mahatma Buddh chose to live on till the age of eighty—man could deny to himself neither food for the body nor fuel for his desire. Desire is the root and cause of life and so long as there is life, there will be desire. The question is whether it is *desirable* to live—and, if so, what kind of life is desirable. But this is a question which men and women—seers as well as fools—have been asking, and seeking an answer to, for the last ten thousand years and more, and are likely to be occupied with for all time to come. For, whatever the answer, it is never more than a half-truth. What we are dealing with is that paradox personified, Man, and the eternal war between his Reason and his Passions. Since Human Nature is, to quote Toynbee, "in truth, a union of opposites that are not only

incongruous but are contrary and conflicting : the spiritual and the physical ; the divine and the animal ; consciousness and sub-consciousness ; intellectual power and moral and physical weakness ; unselfishness and self-centredness ; saintliness and sinfulness ; unlimited capacities and limited strength and time ; in short, greatness and wretchedness: *grandeur et misere*"[4], this conflict is inherent in our nature and, therefore, inseparable from life. Indeed, as the Philosophers of the Upnishads put it, "Only when men shall roll up the sky like a hide, will there be an end to misery, unless God has first been known"[5] ; which raises a still more difficult question : What is God? That, however, is another issue and, though important in the extreme, it need not detain us here.

2. The Garden of Kam

"First before all sprang Kam into being. Gods,
Fathers, mortal men have never matched him.
Stronger than these art thou, and great for ever.
Kam, to thee, to thee I offer worship."

THE ATHARV VED

WHO or What made this universe, and why and through what processes and in what length of time and from what components and ingredients—all this we know not. Nor do we know the aim and end of existence and the purpose and intention of the power which created this world and produced this phenomenon of existence. And what this two-legged creature, Man, is supposed to be doing in this mad, bad, sad, glad, this strange and heady dance of life—this, too, is obscure and uncertain. It is true that there are many answers—some given by Science and several by Religion and Philosophy. But most often all these are conjecture and guess-work. In reality, we are as far from knowing the exact nature of things and the true answer to the riddle of the universe as ever. For, though Religion says she knows she offers contrary and self-contradictory theories: Science is determined to find it out, but admits that at present she is still striving to know. And Philosophy continues to delight in the act of groping in a dark room for the cat which is, in all probability, not there.

And so, for all practical purposes, even today we live because of a terribly intense desire, an all-powerful instinct to live, and act by the adage that for those who believe no proof is necessary, and for those who do not none is possible. In all these several thousands of years, our knowledge has not progressed beyond what the first book of Man tells us :

> *"Then was not non-existent nor existent : there was no realm of air, no sky beyond it.*
>
> *What covered in, and where? and what gave shelter? Was water there, unfathomed depth of water?*
>
> *Death was not then, nor was there aught immortal : no sign was there, the day's and night's divider.*
>
> *That one thing, breathless, breathed by its own nature : apart from it was nothing whatsoever.*
>
> *Darkness there was : at first concealed in darkness, this All was indiscriminated chaos.*
>
> *All that existed then was void and formless : by the great power of warmth was born that unit.*
>
> *Thereafter rose desire in the beginning, Desire, the primal seed and germ of spirit.*
>
> *Sages who searched with their heart's thought discovered the existent's kinship in the non-existent.*
>
> *Transversely was their severing line extended : what was above it then, and what below it?*
>
> *There were begetters, there were mighty forces, free action here and energy up yonder.*
>
> *Who verily knows and who can here declare it, whence it was born and whence comes this creation?*
>
> *The gods are later than this world's production.*
>
> *Who knows, then, whence it first came into being?*
>
> *He, the first origin of this creation, whether he formed it all or did not form it,*

Whose eye controls this world in highest heaven, he verily knows it, or perhaps he knows not."[1]

This great Song of Creation from the Rigved is one of the finest and the loftiest in the realm of thought and even the most cynical and sceptical of the moderns can hardly go beyond the daring doubt cast upon the Creator's own competence : "Or, perhaps he knows not." Not without cause was Adam forbidden to taste the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. All questioning will go on putting us into the kind of circles which the dog trying to catch its own tail keeps on moving through. For, if even he—God—knows not, then possibly there was something before the Creator himself—which sounds absurd to commonsense if not to Philosophy and Religion ; and we shall be tempted to seek refuge in Science for she might know some day !

For the moment, however, we are concerned with the theories formulated by Religion, and, especially, by Indian Thought. Whether the myths and legends of religion are but crude explanations of the phenomena of life and universe, or are divine revelation, transcendental wisdom, and intuition of an order beyond the reaches of science and knowledge, is irrelevant. What is germane to our study is the idea that Desire is the prime mover, the god of gods—after God. And this is, again and again, brought out in other scriptures of the Hindus. The Atharv Ved has two great hymns in praise of this deity and his supremacy :

"*The all-devouring God whom men call Kam,*
he whom they call the Giver and Receiver,
Invincible, pervading, wise, and mighty—to all these
Fires be this oblation offered."[2]

And, again, in that glorious paean,

"*Wide as the space which heaven and earth encompass, far as the flow of waters, far as Agni,*
Stronger than these art thou, and great for ever,

Kam, to thee, to thee I offer worship.
Vast as the quarters of the sky and regions that lie between them spread in all directions, vast as celestial tracts and views of heaven,
Stronger than these art thou, and great for ever,
Kam, to thee, to thee I offer worship.
Many as are the bees, and bats, and reptiles, and female serpents of the trees, and beetles,
Stronger art thou than these, aud great for ever,
Kam, to thee, to thee I offer worship.
Stronger art thou than aught that stands or twinkles, stronger art thou than ocean, Kam! Manyu!
Stronger than these art thou, and great for ever,
Kam, to thee, to thee I offer worship.
Not even Vat is the peer of Kam, not Agni,
Chandramas the Moon, nor Surya.
Stronger than these art thou, and great for ever,
Kam, to thee, to thee I offer worship."[3]

And to the extent it concerns the little story of the human beings, all that was needed was the creation of Birth and Death—since at first, death, too, was not there. The scriptures tell us in great detail of how the beings, including the human beings, were created. In the context of the creation of the world and of thinking of the world as the sacrificial horse, the Upanishads say :

"In the beginning nothing whatsoever was here. This was covered over with death, with hunger—for hunger is death.

Then he[4] made up his mind : 'Would that I had a self.'

So he went on praising. From him, while he was praising, water was produced. 'Verily, while I was praising, I had pleasure'! thought he. This, indeed, is the *ark*[5]-nature of what pertains to brightness. Verily, there is pleasure for him who knows thus that *ark*-nature of what pertains to brightness.

The water, verily, was brightness.

That which was the froth of the water became solidified. That became the earth.

On it he tortured himself. When he had tortured himself and practised austerity, his heat and essence turned into fire.

He divided himself threefold : fire, one-third, the sun, one-third, wind one-third. He also is Life divided threefold.

He desired : 'Would that a second Self of me were produced!' He—death, hunger—by mind copulated with speech. That which was the semen, became the year. Previous to that there was no year. He bore him for a time as long as a year. After that long time he brought him forth. When he was born, Death opened his mouth on him. He cried '*bhan*'. That, indeed, became speech.

He bethought himself : 'Verily, if I shall intend against him, I shall make the less food for myself. With that speech, with that self he brought forth this whole world, whatsoever exists here: the Hymns, the formulas, the Chants, meters, sacrifices, men, cattle."[6]

Another version puts it in this manner :

"In the beginning this was Self alone, in the shape of a person.[7] He looking round saw nothing but his Self. He first said, 'This is I' : therefore he became I by name. Therefore even now, if a man is asked, he first says 'This is I', and then pronounces the other name which he may have. And because before all this, he burnt down all evils, therefore he was a person[8]. Verily he who knows this burns down everyone who tries to be before him.

He feared, and therefore, anyone who is lonely fears. He thought, 'As there is nothing but myself, why should I fear ?' Thence his fear passed away. For what should he have feared ? Verily fear arises from a second only.

But he felt no delight. Therefore a man who is lonely feels no delight. He wished for a second. He was so large as man and

wife together. He then made this his Self to fall in two[9] and thence arose husband and wife. Therefore Yajnavalky[10] said: 'We two are thus like half a shell.' Therefore the void which was there, is filled by the wife. He embraced her, and men were born.

She thought, 'How can he embrace me, after having produced me from himself? I shall hide myself'.

She then became a cow, the other became a bull and embraced her, and hence cows were born. The one became a mare, the other a stallion; the one a male ass, the other a female ass. He embraced her, and hence one-hoofed animals were born. The one became a she-goat, the other a he-goat ; the one became an ewe, the other a ram. He embraced her, and hence goats and sheep were born. And thus he created everything that exists in pairs, down to the ants.

He knew, 'I indeed am this creation, for I created all this.' Hence he became the creation, and he who knows this lives in this his creation ?"[11]

And again, from the same source :

"In the beginning this was Self alone, one only. He desired, 'Let there be a wife for me that I may have offspring, and let there be wealth for me that I may offer sacrifices.' Verily this is the whole desire, and, even if wishing for more, he would not find it. Therefore now also a lonely person desires, 'Let there be a wife for me that I may have offspring, and let there be wealth for me that I may offer sacrifices.' And so long as he does not obtain either of these things, he thinks he is incomplete. Now his completeness (is made up as follows) : mind is his Self (husband); speech the wife; breath the child; the eye all worldly wealth, for he finds it with the eye; the ear his divine wealth, for he hears it with the ear. The body[12] is his work, for with the body he works. This is the fivefold sacrifice, for fivefold is the animal,

fivefold man, fivefold all this whatsoever. He who knows this obtains all this."[13]

As time passed, details of names and events were invented, and interwoven into the general pattern of the story told in the passages quoted above. In the vast store-house of the Vedic, Post-Vedic, Epic and Puranic Literature of India, there are many more accounts of creation and of the origin of the species. But all these are combinations and permutations of the same basic ingredients. There is the Creator—Brahma, Prajapati, the Self, and later, Primeval Energy. There is Desire on the part of this Being or Power, God or Nature, to create ; and there is Delight in creation. Nay, He or It created because, all alone, He or It felt no delight. All this raises issues of great theological importance, and one of the most significant deductions is that God needs Man as much as Man needs God. But we must guard against the danger of getting involved in such flattering off-shoots of religious matters and should not be tempted to explore the fascinating by-lanes of the Divine Ground ; or, else, we shall never reach the end of the story we are at present concerned with.

Let us now have a closer look at the basic elements, and see what seeds are available for the making of the Garden which Desire was out to plant for his and, may be, our delight. Obviously, one important point to note is that of the creation of 'sexes'—the male and the female. Another is that whether we consider the woman as daughter or as sister—for, she has to be either of the two—there is the element of incest. If the One divided himself into two halves; or, if Yam and Yami, the twin children of Vivaswat, were the first male and female, then the first lovers and the originators of the race were brother and sister. If, on the other hand, He created the She out of Himself, then she was the daughter of the Creator—or some later being in the hierarchy, Prajapati or Manu—and, just as Eve was flesh of Adam's flesh, a rib of His

own body ; and father and daughter became the first husband and wife, and begat the race. Brother and sister, father and daughter or mother and son as in the myths and legends of several other countries—all this is labelling. For, they were all only man and woman, the Inviting Male and the Inviting Female of the Japanese myth of creation. In each case, the other was beautiful to behold and desirable. And the object of creation of the other being, woman in the majority of the first myths—daughter of Manu from the residue of the *Pak Yagy* or of Sandhya by Prajapati, of Saraswati by Brahma, and Eve from Adam—was to fascinate and be a help in the process of procreation. In all these thousands, nay tens of thousands of years, there has been no material change in respect of this matter of the object of Desire and the use of Woman. In the course of our study, we shall see that one very important development took place, and for a time created a mental and physical upheaval, which all but upset the apple-cart of Creation. The Female became the Prime Mover and the Male the object of desire. And now that birth-control is both easy and sure, there is bound to be a tremendous revolution in the entire concept of woman, and of morality which has so far been guided by the fundamental consideration that it is the woman who conceives. Of course, not until man can conceive, will Nature be *completely* mastered, and the best that woman may hope for is that if the male cannot conceive, nor will the female. Let the race come to an end, or Science make synthetic babies; Why should she be Nature's ally and Kam's weapon for *their* purposes ? Of course, there is the mother-instinct and all that to be contended against and the four-time greater, as Manu puts it, passion of woman herself. Nevertheless, and until today, the situation remains what it was at the beginning, and it has been excellently summed up by that great misogynist, Schopenhauer.

"With young girls Nature seems to have had in view what in

the language of the drama, is called a *coup de theatre.* For a few years she dowers them with a wealth of beauty and is lavish in her gift of charm, at the expense of the rest of their life, in order that during those years they may capture the fantasy of some man to such a degree that he is hurried into undertaking the honourable care of them, in some form or other, as long as they live—a step for which there would not appear to be any sufficient warranty if reason only directed his thoughts. Accordingly Nature has equipped woman, as she does all her creatures, with the weapons and implements requisite for the safeguarding of her existence, and for just as long as it is necessary for her to have them. Here, as elsewhere, Nature proceeds with her usual economy; for just as the female ant, after fecundation, loses her wings, which are then superfluous, nay, actually a danger to the business of breeding; so, after giving birth to one or two children, a woman generally loses her beauty; probably, indeed, for similar reasons."[14]

Indeed, there is nothing more fascinating to the eyes of the male at a particular stage of life, if not all through his life, than the sight of youth and beauty in female form. In one myth, she may be Pandora, which brings forth all the woes and troubles of man; in another, Eve, the tempted and the temptress, the Devil's agent to make both her and Man lose the Garden of Eden, the Paradise, God planted for them to dwell in ; in a third, she may be the personification of Divine Grace, the image of Rati, and so on ! But in all, she is the Apsara, alluring in the extreme, and act to make man turn away from contemplating and performing penances, from thinking of renunciation or *nirvan,* from attempting to occupy Indr's throne, or be like the gods, immortal and knowing. She is there to keep him from all that and to turn to her and, through her, to the business of life, and to the tending of the garden Adam and Eve have created out of the wilderness into which they were pushed, or to take his delight in the Perfumed

Garden of Kam where Spring sings and flowers smile, and nothing is single, or will not remain, must not remain, so, for long !

Now a garden is something which conjures up a vision of order and beauty, and colour and fragrance, and the flutter of the birds and the kiss of the breeze, of Delight, and of desirable things one loves to pluck or enjoy. Again, there are three points of note about a garden. It must be planned carefully, and planted carefully and tended with care and diligence after it has been planted. And though different from the forest and the wilderness, it must, all the same, follow the laws of nature and the rhythm of the seasons. And the Gardener must know of the relationship of the seed and the fruit, the soil and the sprout, the field and the plough, the bed and its irrigation. To succeed and to sustain itself, culture must cultivate the natural and in accordance with the demands of Nature. There must be hedges to keep the prowling enemy away, and worms and weeds duly guarded against. Further, if there have to be thorns and thistles and brambles and bushes, they might be made use of, also for, with thought and care, Man can create cosmos out of chaos and extract nectar out of poison itself. As for the canker in the rose and Satan in the soul or self—if these are not understood and dealt with, then the flower will perish and the garden lost before we know what had happened. Eternal vigilance is the price not of liberty alone, but of all things good and beautiful, of all things desirable and fine, of health and honour, of riches and learning, and of life and love.

And it is because the Hindu understood all this, and because he began with a hearty acceptance of life, and a healthy desire to live, and because he had the necessary humility which makes one attempt to first perceive things as they are and then proceed to fix how they ought to be, and not put the cart before the horse, that he succeeded in formulating theories and prescribing

practices which, considering the over-all limitations of human thought and judgement, are a tribute to the Indian genius. Observing that contrary pulls tugged at Desire and that there was confusion as to the purpose of life, he, the Hindu, saw the simple truth that there need not be just one wish nor one purpose. He saw that the year—an important concept occurring at the very beginning of Indian thought—had seasons, and so let life be divided into seasons. And just as each season had its own flowers and fruits, our desires and deeds could be related likewise to each season of life. He dealt similarly with the purposes of existence. Accepting that He knows—and perhaps even He knows not—as to the infinite, the Indian mind proceeded to regulate the finite. Not Desire and Delight only—making love or making merry; nor earning and accumulating wealth only ; nor doing one's duty by the world and the gods only; nor, again, seeking salvation only, but all these, and in due season, composed the total of man's life and constituted his work and values. *Dharm*, duty ; *Arth*, material wealth ; *Kam*, desire including both love and marriage, delights of the sexual activity and perpetuation of the race ; and *Moksh*, salvation, release from the cycle of birth and rebirth—this was the fourfold end of man's life, and each of these had its due and proper time.

Life for the Hindu was not a wilderness into which Adam and Eve had been thrown out of paradise to expiate for their sin, so that the best that man could do was to console himself with verse and wine and woman :

"*A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,*
A flask of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow !" [15]

and to make merry, for tomorrow we die. Nor was life meant to be all toil and travail. No, life was Kam's Garden, and

Desire had endless forms, and all were right if pursued properly and in season due. Indeed, it was required that all the forms of Desire be duly *enjoyed* and the ends of existence diligently achieved. Enjoy or achieve—this was Life's formula, and at its best, it was enjoy and achieve, for right enjoyment led to right achievement automatically.

But we anticipate. All this will come up at a later stage of our enquiry into the meaning of India's erotic philosophy and art. Indeed, one of the chief aims, salvation—*moksh*, *mukti*, *nirvan*, was, in the opinion of some, a later idea. For, only when life was thought of as pain, and punishment, did it become necessary to cease to be, or to get out of this hell and misery of existence into some heaven or state of bliss, whether through merging into the Original of which the souls or beings were but part, or otherwise. This was a concept and contribution not of the Vedic seers but of the Buddhist, Jewish, and Christian thinkers. Until the Buddh came, the Indian occupied himself with three aims *dharm*, *arth* and *kam*. These are indicated in the passage already quoted from the Brihad-aranyak Upanishad : He desired, "Let there be a wife for me that I may have offspring, and let there be wealth for me that I may offer sacrifices." In the *Kamsutr*, Vatsyayan clearly wrote down about life's goals and objectives, and the due place of each. Sexual enjoyment is right only to the extent it "does not hamper the pursuit of the other two Objectives of Life. Satisfaction of erotic desire is subordinate to pursuit of wealth which, again, is subordinate to that of religious merit. Religious merit, therefore, has the pride of place among life's objectives." Admitting that unbridled passion led and will continue to lead men into ruin, he stated : "sexual satisfaction, like food, is equally essential to the maintenance of bodily health and is consequently as important as wealth and religion. Though evil effects may follow over-indulgence, passion has to be appeased ; one cannot refrain

from cooking food because beggars are about or from sowing barley seed lest the deer should come and eat up all the corn. The gratification of the sexual impulse is as necessary as the pursuit of *dharm* or *arth*. Man will attain unblemished happiness by serving, *arth*, *kam* and *dharm* in this manner. Cultured men engage in activities that do not endanger their prospects in the other world, that do not involve loss of wealth and that are withal pleasant. They should do what favours all the objectives or two or even one of them without conflicting with the others or one of the others." He was writing a book on the science of love and teaching the art of leading a sane sex-life. It was necessary that people should know the right principles and pursue them rightly. For, "one who has rightly understood the principles of this science gains mastery over the sexual desire by pursuing without detriment the three Objectives of life—*dharm* *arth* and *kam*—and by establishing himself in the proper path for success in this and the next world. Unfailing success awaits the wise and prudent man who, having mastered this science, pays strict attention to *dharm* and *arth* and also has *kam* without exececssive passion and applies the principles of this science in the appropriate manner."

Thus, through the ages, elaborate theories and practice were evolved and great treatises written, and all floating thought on the matter was duly codified. In the field of *kam*, many books were produced. In his *Kamsutr*, Vatsyayan mentions a deal of work on the same subject on which he had based his own. And as often happens with respect to specialization, in this case also, the specialists generally extolled their own field of interest out of all proportion. The whole view was affected and an imbalance created. The right place of *dharm* and *arth* and *kam* in the scheme of things was lost sight of, and different schools arose, almost on the lines of a caste system ! There were those who

thought of *arth,* material wealth, as all in all, believed that what mattered was success, and worshipped none but Lakshmi or Kuber. Likewise, there was the type who put *kam* above everything else, and *Madanotsav* and *Kampuja,* festivals and worship of the Love-god, got into great vogue. The primrose path of dalliance was so delectable that man found it most desirable to believe in Desire and to accept him as *the* god. A complete and elaborate biography was invented for him, and an outfit provided. With Rati for wife and Spring for friend, and carrying a bow whose string is made of humming bees, and shooting flowery arrows at all beings both mortal and divine, *Kam* rides on a parrot, his vehicle, throughout the universe. The *apsaras* of heaven are his hand-maids and whenever the gods are in dire distress they summon him to their aid. When they wanted Shiv to beget a son—the War-god—through Parvati, it was he, *Kam,* who was called upon to perform the most difficult task of his life and career, that of making Shiv the Yogi, a *grihasth.* His first victim had been Prajapati himself, the Creator : "the Lord of Creation prompted by his senses felt a desire for his daughter."[16] writes Kalidas. And though *Kam* was burnt by the fire issuing from Shiv's third eye, finally Shiv too was conquered, if not by the Fascination-tipped arrow of Kam, certainly by that personification of Fascination, Parvati, who shamed in appearance Rati herself. So potent was her charm that when the nuptials of the divine couple had been agreed to, the god Shiv, could hardly wait for the auspicious wedding-time which was only three days away ! To quote from Kalidas's Kumarsambhav, "The Lord of the brutes too eager for the company of the Mountain-daughter passed those days with difficulty. Whom else—subject to the senses—would these sentiments of love not disturb, since they affect even the all-powerful ?"[17]

And so, myth and story, poetry and drama, and above all, the

facts of life, gave *Kam* an ascendancy which grew by leaps and bounds and assumed alarming proportions by the time of the Mahabharat. In that great epic, Bhim speaks of him thus : "Without *Kam* a man has no wish for worldly profit (*Arth*), without *Kam* a man does not strive after the Good (*Dharm*). For the sake of *Kam* the Rishis even give themselves up to asceticism, eating the leaves of trees, fruits and roots, living on the air, and wholly bridling their senses, and others bend all their zeal to the *Veds* and lesser *Veds*, making their way through the whole of the holy study, as also to ancestral offerings, and sacrificial acts, to alms-giving and alms-taking. Traders, husbandmen, craftsmen, as also artists, and those who carry out actions consecrated to the gods, give themselves up to their works because of *Kam*. Others, again, take to the sea filled with *Kam*; for *Kam* has the most varied forms; everything is steeped in *Kam*. No being ever was, or is, or will be, higher than the being that is filled with *Kam*. It is the innermost core (of the world), O King of righteousness ; on it is founded *Dharm* and *Arth*. As butter from sour milk, so *Kam* comes forth from *Arth* and *Dharm*...*Kam* is more excellent than *Arth* and *Dharm*. As honey is the sweet juice from the flower, so *Kam* is from these two, according to the teaching of tradition. *Kam* is the womb of *Dharm* and *Arth*, and *Kam* makes up their essence. Without *Kam* the manifold workings of the world would be unthinkable:

> "*Give thyself up to Kam, take thy joy with women*
> *In fair garb and ornament, and sweet to behold,*
> *With young women loosed in the madness of drink* ;
> *For Kam, O King, for us is greatest of all.*"[18]

The stage was now set for someone to take note of this extraordinary importance given to *Kam*, and to dethrone him. *Kam* had become the *dharm*, or, to put it differently, *dharm* had suffered a great reverse. And the law of life required that balance

be restored, and the head placed above the heart and the heart above the loins :

> *"Whenever spirituality decays and materialism is rampant, then, O Arjun ! I reincarnate Myself."*

says Krishn in the Geeta. Some one had to come to earth and vanquish the god which had grown to be God. Such a one appeared in the form of the Buddh, the Enlightened One. Shiv had burnt Kam with the fire from the third-eye—that of the Mind ; and the Wise One knew that the darkness of desire had to be dispelled by the light of knowledge. He did that, and in the process, set into motion ideas and values which were destined to have a far-reaching effect on human thought and conduct.

After the Buddh has had his bout with Mar, a combination ot two older gods, *Yam* and *Kam*, in one, and defeated the Enemy, Wisdom became the rule. But we cannot love and be wise at the same time, and so Love was banished. In one myth, he had been destroyed by Shiv, but had to be revived for the happiness of embodied beings was dependent on him. Buddhism ignored the lesson, and offered too much of wisdom, too little of love. This interfered with the basic needs of human nature, and proved to be wrong practice, even if it were the right policy. At any rate, it started a movement which, in due course, produced, among other things, the interesting and intriguing phenomenon which is the subject of our study.

3. Root of All Evil

"Whoever in this world renounces lusts,
Whoever abandons the house life and retires from the world,
Whoever has extinguished the essence of lust,
Such a man I call a Brahman."

DHAMMPAD

THE greatest of India's sons, Mahatma Buddh, is almost universally acknowledged as the greatest of men. He founded a great and still living faith which claimed, before Communism began to spread in Asia, the largest number of followers. And formal following apart, the impact and influence of his thought, wisdom and personality have been otherwise also, tremendous. Because of his coming, the world of man has not been the same as it was before this fine being appeared upon earth. The story of his life reads like the pages of a romance; and if ever there was a prince charming who was destined to be the king of kings in the realm of spirit, Gautam of the Shaky Clan was such a one. Obviously, the story of such a man would be the study of many, and a mountain of material would be written on him, and an ocean of myths and legends invented. Shorn of frills and adornment and of the huge and complicated mass of fiction interwoven into his biography, the bare outlines of Buddh's life and work are as follows. He was born the only son of King Shuddhodan of the Shaky Clan of Kapilvastu, situated on the Nepalese border at a

distance of about one hundred miles north of Banaras. The year of his birth is generally accepted to be 563 B.C. The boy was named Siddharth, Gautam being his family name. Priests and wise men told the king that his son would some day become a great emperor if he reigned. On the other hand, he might renounce the world, in which case he would become a *Maharshi*. The father was greatly agitated by this prophecy and positively alarmed by the latter possibility. He adopted, therefore, extreme measures to keep his child away from all knowledge of the dark and seamy side of life. Gautam's mother, Mahamaya, had died soon after his birth, and it was her mother's sister and Shuddhodan's second wife, Gautami, who brought up the child. The boy was shielded so well that not a breath of evil passed through the high walls which shut Siddharth into what was virtually a prison even if, in form, it was a pleasure-palace appointed with all comforts and luxuries, and a veritable paradise. The boy thus grew up in complete ignorance of what life really was ; and it was roses, roses all the way until, escaping one day from the palace-prison, he saw the world and had a glimpse of phenomena which were strange and depressing and upsetting in the extreme. On his first excursion into the world of reality, he met with sights which gave a terrible jolt to his sheltered and, therefore, doubly sensitive soul. The sights that he had seen were an old man, and a sick man and a dead man, and, they say, a wandering ascetic. The first three provided an insight into what life really was. He realised that the season of youth would pass some day and old age would set in. His supple and handsome body, full of freshness and vitality and health at that time, would one day be a sick thing, a dwelling of diseases, and was already on its way to becoming food for the worms or the final oblation to Agni, the god of Fire. This then was the end of all beings who were born and none might escape this cycle of growth and development and decay and death. The

fourth sight which he had come across, that of a wandering ascetic, made him think of becoming a recluse, living far from the world of love and pleasure. These latter, love and pleasure, he had been having to his fill, for he had already got married to a most gracious and beautiful woman, Yashodhra, and a son, Rahul by name, had been born to them. The chains that bind man to the world were all there. However, the desire for getting away his passion for a life of other-worldliness began increasing every-day. Before long it became uncontrollable, and one dark night he stole away from the palace, after a last lingering look of love and longing on his wife and child. Channa, his charioteer and favourite servant, the same in whose company he had roamed the city and seen that which had moved him so deeply, had kept a horse ready for him as well as for himself and the two rode away under cover of darkness. Having put a safe distance between himself and his people, Siddharth sent Channa back to report about the event, and to him he gave away all his clothing and ornaments.

Though it had begun as a flight, the great quest for truth was on in earnest. This quest was destined to lead this noble seeker to that light and wisdom which made him become for mankind the Buddh, the Wise One, the Enlightened. He was twenty-nine when he had left his home and it took him about seven years of effort, involving a hard penance and high contemplation, to reach the state of enlightenment. During these years, he tried the various systems of thought and philosophy and practice which were then current and were recommended to the student of spirituality. He tested system after system and then gave it up to move on to some other place, to some other preceptor and to some other practice. Finding that neither the learning of the Brahmans nor the austerities practised by the Yogis, helped him much in progressing towards his goal, he arrived at the conclusion that he would have to carve his own

way both out of the jungle of darkness and ignorance which was human life, and out of the bog of superstitious beliefs and meaningless dogma which Indian society and religion stood for at that time. Having reached in his wanderings a spot near the village of Uruvela, on the bank of the river Nairanjan in Bihar, he decided to work out his salvation. Asceticism was not the path to enlightenment, for, in spite of having undertaken the severest fasts, and having inflicted on himself terrible austerities he was as far away from seeing light as ever. He was out to find the answer to the great questions which life posed, the whence and wherefore of it, and the end and purpose of existence. They say that he sat down there under a tree—known since then as the Bodhi tree—and took a great vow ; "Let my skin, sinew, and bones become dry—and welcome ! Let all the flesh and blood in my body dry up ! Never will I stir from this seat till I have attained supreme and absolute wisdom."[1] And there he remained "cross legged, in an unconquerable position, from which not even the descent of a hundred thunderbolts simultaneously could have dislodged him."[2] Just as in the myths and legends of the Hindus, the penance and austerities of some great Yogi make Indr afraid that his throne and heaven would be lost, so in this case Mar, the Tempter, was greatly agitated over the possibility of Gautam becoming the Buddh. He tried all manner of means, and all the weapons in his armoury were used to deflect the Buddh from his course. When the weapons which caused dread and fear had failed to be effective, Mar used the weapons which the Hindu God of Love, Kam, would have taken to. Kam makes use of Apsaras who are Indr's slaves. Mar brought forth his three daughters, Tanha, Rati and Rag, and in the impressive language of Anand Kumaraswamy*:* "they danced before the Bodhisatt like the swaying branches of a young leafy tree, using all the arts of seduction known to beautiful women. Again they offered him the lordship of the earth, and the companionship of beautiful girls ; they appealed

to him with songs of the season of spring, and exhibited their supernatural beauty and grace. But the Bodhisatt's heart was not in the least moved, and he answered :

> "*Pleasure is brief as a flash of lightning*
> *Or like an Autumn shower, only for a moment . . . . . .*
> *Why should I then covet the pleasures you speak of ?*
> *I see your bodies are full of all impurity :*
> *Birth and death, sickness and age are yours.*
> *I seek the highest prize, hard to attain by men—*
> *The true and constant wisdom of the wise'.*"[3]

The final ordeal over, the Shaky Muni now obtained perfect enlightenment :

> "*Through many a round of birth and death I ran,*
> *Nor found the builder that I sought. Life's stream*
> *Is birth and death and birth, with sorrow filled.*
> *Now, House-builder, thou'rt seen ! No more shall build ;*
> *Broken are all thy rafters, split thy beam !*
> *All that made up this mortal self is gone.*
> *Mind hath slain craving. I have crossed the stream.*"[4]

This great event is supposed to have taken place when the Buddh was about thirty-six years. Normally, it would have been expected that having attained the ending of desire he should have passed on to the stillness of *Nirvan,* to the blessed state of non-being. Nevertheless, he decided to return to the *sansar* and teach and preach so that others might be helped to move along the path of wisdom and attain *Nirvan.* They say that this decision of his was taken on the request of Brahma himself. The Buddh had doubts whether considering its depth, it would be possible to make the truth he had found, known to others. Chaung Tsa puts the Buddh's reasoning thus : "Great truths do not take hold of the hearts of the masses . . . . . . And now, as all the world is in error, I, though I know the true path—how shall I, how shall I guide ? If I know

that I cannot succeed and yet try to force success, this would be but another source of error. Better, then, to desist and strive no more. But if I strive not, who will?"[5] Perceiving the double-mindedness of the Buddh and fearing that if the Enlightened One chose to ignore the need of the world, the world would be altogether lost, Mahabrahma, attended upon by all the other gods of heaven, came in haste and besought the Master to proclaim the Truth.

From Budh-Gaya, as the site of his enlightenment is known, the Buddh moved on to Banaras, and there in the Deer Park, he met five of his earlier companions and disciples with whom he had at one time striven along lines different from what he had now found to be the true way. To them he delivered the first of his sermons, the same which set into motion the Wheel of the Law. There are two extremes which he, who has gone forth, ought not to follow—habitual devotion, on the one hand, to the passions, to the pleasure of sensual things, a low and pagan way (of seeking satisfaction), ignoble, unprofitable, fit only for the worldly-minded; and habitual devotion, on the other hand, to self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble, unprofitable. There is a Middle Path discovered by the Tathagat—a path which opens the eyes, and bestows understanding, which leads to peace, to insight, to the higher wisdom, to *Nirvana.* Verily ! it is this Aryan Eightfold Path ; that is to say Right Views, Right Aspirations, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right mode of livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Rapture.

"Now this is the Noble Truth as to suffering. Birth is attended with pain, decay is painful, disease is painful, death is painful. Union with the unpleasant is painful, painful is separation from the pleasant ; and any craving unsatisfied, that, too, is painful. In brief, the five aggregates of clinging (that is, the conditions of individuality) are painful.

"Now this is the Noble Truth as to the origin of suffering. Verily ! it is the craving thirst that causes the renewal of becomings, that is accompanied by sensual delights, and seeks satisfaction, now here now there—that is to say, the craving for the gratification of the senses, or the craving for prosperity.

"Now this is the Noble Truth as to the passing away of pain. Verily ! it is the passing away so that no passion remains, the giving up, the getting rid of, the emancipation from the harbouring no longer of this craving thirst.

"Now this is the Noble Truth as to the way that leads to the passing away of pain. Verily ! it is the Aryan Eightfold Path, that is to say, Right Views, Right Aspirations, Right Speech, Right conduct, Right mode of livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Rapture."[5]

This then was the wisdom and message of the Buddh, this the truth behind the riddle of life he had sought after and this the solution he had offered. Life was sorrow and suffering and pain, and all because of attachment and craving. It was Desire and its great mesh and snares which caught us for ever and which in countless ways kept us bound and chained to the wheel of existence. Desire then was at the root of life, and what man had to do was to get out of the clutches of this arch enemy, Mar. He was *Indr*, *Yam* and *Kam* all rolled into one, and his wiles and weapons were as many as the breaths of our being and the stars in the sky. Earlier, too, woman had been thought of as the object of pleasure, and the cause of allurement, and had been used again and again by *Indr* and *Kam* to tempt even great sages like Vishwamitr, nay Shiv Himself. Now in his final battle, Mar had used the same weapon in the form of his daughters, representing sexual delight, craving and infatuation, the triplestrong thread that binds flesh to flesh and heart to heart, the same which had at one time bound the Buddh himself to life, through his wife, Yashodhra. So,

woman became the symbol of Desire. As the source of generation, as the mother of the race, as the incarnation of Allurement and Inducement, it is she who tempts man into love and love-making, and binds him to worldliness. Therefore, she became the personification of evil. If man had to overcome desire, the primary cause, he had to overcome the call of his senses and defeat woman. Woman must be banished from man's life. That became the all-important approach. No wonder then that we should find in the early Buddhist thought nothing but deprecation and denunciation of woman: "Women are soon angered, Anand ; women are full of passion, Anand ; women are envious, Anand ; women are stupid, Anand. That is the reason, Anand, that the cause, why women have no place in public assemblies, do not carry on a business, and do not earn their living by any profession."[6] And, "Unfathomably deep, deep like a fish's course in the water, is the character of women, robbers with many artifices, with whom truth is hard to find, to whom a lie is like the truth and the truth is like a lie....No heed should be paid either to their likes or to their dislikes."[7]

When Anand, his favourite disciple asked him: "Master, how shall we behave before women?"—He had answered : "You should shun their gaze, Anand,"—"But if we see them, Master, what then are we to do?"—"Not speak to them, Anand."—"But if we do speak to them, what then?"—"Then you must watch over yourselves, Anand."[8]

Actually, Anand had been all the while pleading with the Master that women be allowed to take the vow. The Buddh, had, however, not agreed until the very last moment of his life, and even then he had done so with extreme reluctance and grave doubts. He had fears and forebodings as to the consequences of such a step and spoke of these in the following words :

"Anand, if women had not been permitted to go forth from the home into the homeless life under the Norm-Discipline set

forth by the Tathagata, then would the righteous life last long, the Good Norm would last, Anand, a thousand years. But now, Anand, since women have been permitted to go forth from the home into the homeless life...not for long will the righteous life prevail; only for five hundred years, Anand, wlll the Good Norm stand fast.

"Just as, Anand . . . . . . when the mildew falls upon a blooming paddy-field, that paddy-field does not last for long, even so, Anand, under whatsoever Norm-Discipline women-folk get permission to wander forth from the home into the homeless life, not for long does that righteous life prevail."[9]

Thus it came about that through the wisdom and enlightenment of the Buddh, woman came to be regarded as the symbol of desire and temptation and, therefore, the root of evil. Life was not worth living for it was pain and sorrow. Men should beware that they were caught in the powerful noose of Desire, and so far as the male was concerned, it was woman who, as the ally of Desire, drew him into the deep waters of the ocean of life from which it was so difficult, so very difficult, almost impossible, to swim away to the calm shores of non-being. Then began a new phase in the relationship between man and woman. Woman was lowered down to a despicable position and sex regarded as bestial activity. A new faith arose which was opposed to the fundamentals of Nature. A new philosophy came up which was an affront and insult to Life. And Nature and Life do not that easily allow interference with their laws. The father of the Buddh, King Shuddhodan, had made an error of judgement in shutting the mind of his son from knowing the facts of Life. Consequently, Life had punished the father by making the son do exactly what Shuddhodan had dreaded and tried to prevent. The folly of the father had been the beginning of the wisdom of the son. In his own turn, however, the Buddh chose to forget the lesson and preached the

other half of the truth. The result was that in years to come *his* children, the Buddhists, and all others who had been influenced by the Buddhist philosophy, were led directly or indirectly into paths and pastures the very thought of which would have shocked the Buddh. He dimly saw what was coming but even his wisdom could not foresee that worse than what he thought would follow, and that extremes of conduct connected with sexual morality would be practised in the name of the Founder and his creed. In one sense, the fault was his own. Instead of proceeding to *Nirvan*, he had come back to *Sansar*, and once that had been done, the *Sansar* had to be accepted as *Sansar* with all its mixed blessings, its good and evil, its desires and frustrations.

As we have already indicated, it was the attempt to banish woman and to do away with sex, and thus to interfere with that which was natural, which led later on to sexual excesses. These became the rule and practice of later generations. It was the inordinate curbing of the passions demanded by Buddhism, which, through a powerful reaction, produced that orgiastic ? approach to sexual activity and satisfaction of desire which became and remained a common feature of the life of the people for centuries. Since religion and life are not two water-tight compartments, but so intimately inter-linked that for India they have been synonymous; and since Art, as the handmaid of Religion, did what the latter decreed, this philosophy found expression in art in many lands. Of course, the development was not as simple and straight as it might appear. On the contrary, it was a highly intricate affair. In the chapters that follow, we shall study this process of development and see the human mind, which is an adept at finding excuses and justifications and philosophies for doing that which it desires to do, working at its ablest best.

4. From Temptress to Goddess

"What is the use of many idle speeches? Only two things are worth a man's attention: The youth of full-breasted women, prone to fresh pleasures, and the forest."

BHARTARI HARI

WOMAN—Female of the human species, part of the phenomenon called Life, a cog in the machine which is Nature, as necessary for procreation as the male of the species, and, no better, nor worse than her mate, yet despised often like dust and worms, and then adored beyond measure; as the weaker sex, imagined to be so frail that her name is Frailty, yet proving at times, stronger than the mightiest of men, and more daring than the War-god himself; sweet and suffering, chaste and noble and uncomplaining as Sita and vile and wicked, greedy and lustful, cunning and revengeful as Shurpankha; as Man's mother and sister, wife and daughter, lover and beloved, his nurse and guide, friend and companion on the journey of life; the light and grace and joy of existence; and, equally, the symbol of sin and misery, the source of darkness and disgrace and grief; man's worst enemy; a compound of contradictions, appearing in so many and such contrary forms that man's mind gets confused, and his judgment clouded to such an extent that he thinks of her as this, that and the other, in a dozen ways, and a score of forms, ranging between temptress and goddess—Delilah and Devi—nay, more, between bitch and

Beautitude, animal and *Atman*; womb and *Nirvan*; shadow and Self, creature and Creator—only never as what she is: Woman.

And Body—this bundle of bones, blood, skin and sinews, another cog in the machinery, another of the means to some end, the same end, of living and procreating, but misunderstood, and under-rated or over-rated, reviled or worshipped, denounced and lauded in the same fashion as woman; by one thought of as container of impurities and abode of the devil, and by another regarded as the incarnation of Beauty and temple of the Soul; its heart, an organ that beats to keep the blood moving and—loves; its head, a unit to house the nose and the eyes and the ears and the mouth, yet containing a brain which has created a universe; and its eyes that see both fair and foul, and the tongue which utters sacred words or terms of abuse; and the organs of sex, those things between the thighs, the Ling and the Yoni, regarded as the root of all trouble and the source of all bliss, urinate as well as procreate—all in all, all the contradictions are there once again, so that for those who are out to see things as they are, the body *is,* and is body.

And Life, which every one, sage and scientist, philosopher and thinker, poet and potter, is out to understand, but understands not, is again treated in like manner. God's gift and grace, Man's curse and punishment, meant for joy, means of sorrow, waters of Illusion, reflection of the Divine, Evolution continuous or Progress stunted, a thing of no importance, a road to release, cruel sport of the gods, an experiment of Nature, brief as a flight of a sparrow entering from the door and flying out of the window, coeval with the Creator, eternal as Himself—while, in fact, so little is known and so little of it knowable that the wise keep silent and the fool should not speak. And of these three phenomena, Woman, Body and Life, endless thought and endless talk, and most of it but error and much of it worse, prejudice and

intentional wickedness, fabrication and fiction, propaganda and excuse for justifying short-sighted ends. Any one who gets but one glimpse of the intense dark of ignorance sets up as a saviour, no less; whereas, in fact, this is no better than the quarter-eyed leading the bat-blind through a forest in the night. Indeed, it has all been so bad, this thinking of our thinkers, that when some one says from seeming humility that all that he knows is that he knows nothing, one may be sure that a new cult, of Ignorance as Bliss, Illiteracy as Scriptures, Humility as Power, Death as Life, or some such brilliant nonsense is being passed on as revelation.

To revert, whereas in respect of the Ultimates most of our Enlightened Ones have usually admitted their ignorance and incapacity, about the other phenomena which we have been considering they have often spoken with authority, and helped in adding to the confusion. The Buddh did no less. It is true that there was nothing *new* as such which he discovered or said. Only, he discerned it so clearly, and said it so well and convincingly, and had such a long stretch of years given to him for spreading the light of his gospel, that the results were astonishing. By the time, he left this world, in the year 483 B.C., it had been firmly established in the minds of many that life was worthless and non-being the only desirable goal. At its worst this approach was to result—much later—in *Shav Puja*, worship of corpses, and in influencing men's thought and minds so subtly that even those who belong to other creeds, and are artists—lovers of beauty, lovers of life—at that, could sympathise with the following:-

"For, looking too long upon life, may one not find all this to be not the beautiful, nor the mysterious, nor the tragic, but the dull, the melodramatic, and the silly: the conspiracy against vitality—against both red and white heat? And from such things which lack the sun of life it is not possible to draw inspiration.

But from that mysterious, joyous, and superbly complete life which is called Death......which seems a kind of spring, a blossoming from this land and from this idea can come so vast an inspiration, that with unhesitating exultation I leap forward to it; and behold, in an instant, I find my arms full of flowers."[1]

Regarding the body, this engine of love, this receptacle of lusts, the Buddh had very clear opinions which he set fourth in the second and third of his sermons: "The body, O Bhikkhus, cannot be the eternal soul, for it tends toward destruction. Nor do sensation, perception, the pre-dispositions, and consciousness together constitute the eternal soul, for were it so, it would not be the case that the consciousness likewise tends towards destruction. Or how think you, whether is form permanent or transitory? and whether are sensation, perception, and pre-dispositions and consciousness permanent or transitory? 'They are transitory,' replied the Five. 'And that which is transitory, is it evil or good?' 'It is evil,' replied the Five. 'And that which is transitory, evil, and liable to change, can it be said that This is mine, this am I, this is my eternal soul?' 'Nay, verily, it cannot be so said,' replied the Five. 'Then, O Bhikkhus, it must be said of all physical form whatsoever, past or present or to be, subjective or objective, far or near, high or low, that 'This is not mine, this am I not, this is not my eternal soul.' And in like manner of all sensations, perceptions, pre-dispositions and consciousness, it must be said, 'These are not mine, these am I not, these are not my eternal soul.' And perceiving this, O Bhikkhus, the true disciple will conceive a disgust for physical form, and for sensation, perception, predispositions and consciousness, and so will be divested of desire; and thereby he is freed, and becomes aware that he is freed; and he knows that becoming is exhausted, that he has lived the pure life, that he has done what it behoved him do, and that he has put off mortality for ever."[2]

That in the second discourse, 'On the Non-existence of Soul'; and in the third, the 'Discourse on Fire' : "All things, O Bhikkhus, are on fire. And what, O Bhikkhus, are all these things that are on fire? The eye is on fire, forms are on fire, eye-consciousness is on fire, impressions received by the eye are on fire; and whatever sensation—pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral—originates in the impressions received by the eye, is likewise on fire.

"And with what are all these on fire? I say with the fire of lust, of resentment, and the fire of glamour; with birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief and despair they are afire.

"And so with the ear, with the nose, and with the tongue, and in the case of touch. The mind, too, is on fire, thoughts are on fire; and mind-consciousness, and the impressions received by the mind, and the sensations that arise from the impressions that the mind receives, these too are on fire.

"And with what are they on fire? I say with the fire of lust, with the fire of resentment, and the fire of glamour; with birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, and grief and despair, they are afire.

"And seeing this, O Bhikkhus, the true disciple conceives disgust for the eye, for forms, the eye-consciousness, for impressions received by the eye, and for the sensations arising therein; and for the ear, the nose, the tongue, and for the sense of touch, and for the mind, and for thoughts and mind-consciousness, impressions, and sensations. And so he is divested of desire, and thereby he is freed, and is aware that he is freed, and he knows that becoming is exhausted, that he has lived the pure life, that he has done that it behoved him to do, and that he has put off mortality for ever."[3]

Poor body, wretched form, pitiable organs of sensation! Yet none of these more poor, more wretched or more pitiable than Woman. Of the Buddhist view of her, we have already had some

idea—but let us sum it up so that we can get on with the story of the great reaction which converted the daughters of Mar, and the apsaras of Indr, nay, anything and everything in the form of human female, into goddesses, all partaking in the essence of the Essence, in the life of the Life, in the resplendence of the Resplendent.

On the night of his departure from home, the Buddh was being specially guarded and specially beguiled. He had earlier told his father that he had resolved to take to the life of the homeless. The argument between father and son, on this wish of the future Buddh, ran thus : "Sire, the time is at hand for my going forth, do not hinder me, but permit me to depart." The king's eyes were charged with tears, and he answered : "What is there needful to change thy purpose? Tell me whatever thou desirest and it shall be thine, be it myself, the palace, or the kingdom." The Boddhisattv replied, "Sire, I desire four things, pray thee grant them: the first, to remain for ever in possession of the fresh colour of youth; the second, that sickness may never attack me; the third, that my life may have no term; the last, that I may not be subject to decay." When the king heard these words, he was overcome by grief, for the prince desired what it was not possible for a man to bestow. Then the Boddhisattv continued : "If then I cannot avoid old age, sickness, death and decay, grant at least this one thing, that when I leave this world I may nevermore be subject to rebirth."[4] Failing to deflect his son from his resolve, the king commanded that the palace guard be strengthened, and singers and dancing girls were ordered to entertain him. Then, "fair as the nymphs of heaven, they danced and sang and played. But the Bodhisattv, his heart being estranged from sin, took no pleasure in the entertainment, and fell asleep. And the women seeing that he slept, laid aside their instruments and fell asleep likewise. And when the lamps

that were fed with scented oil were on the point of dying, the Boddhisattv awoke, and he saw the girls that had seemed so fair, in all the disarray of slumber. And the king's son, seeing them thus dishevelled and disarrayed, breathing heavily, yawning and sprawling in unseemly postures, was moved to scorn. 'Such is the true nature of women,' he thought, 'but a man is deceived by dress and jewels and is deluded by a woman's beauties. If a man would but consider the natural state of women and the change that comes upon them in sleep, assuredly he would not cherish his folly; but he is smitten from a right will, and so succumbs to passion.' And therewith he resolved to accomplish the Great Renunciation that very night, and at that very time, for it seemed to him that every mode of existence on earth or in heaven most resembled a delay in a house already become the prey of devouring flames."[5] This makes the Buddh leave home *directly* because of women and the folly of man's passion for them. That woman was also the final weapon used by Mar has already been indicated. Like all else, woman, life of Man's life, was equated with Death; and her sex and beauty were buried deep under a philosophy of negation. At one stage, Buddhism could speak like this: "Reverend Sir, have you seen a woman pass this way?" And the elder said:

"Was it a woman, or a man
That passed this way? I cannot tell.
But this I know, a set of bones
is travelling upon this road."[6]

Generally, therefore, the Buddhist "no longer took delight in womankind", and would allow "no woman to share in the good work." The maximum that woman could be tolerated as was as the good and quiet wife. Even when the Buddh finally agreed to admit woman into the order, she was discriminated against. The admission was subject to "eighty weighty regulations, beginning

with one to the effect that even the eldest ordained Sister must stand before and behave with extreme humility toward a Brother, if even only ordained a single day."[7] Even so, and as we have noted earlier, the Buddh had his doubts and fears that the Dharm would be worse and the weaker for association with the female sex.

Things could go no further, so far as Life and Nature were concerned, nor woman humiliated more. And now the counter-forces began their operation. The situation was not new, only this time it had been exaggerated beyond measure. What is worse, it is amazing that a man should have read both the Book of Life and even the books men had written before him ever so wrongly, called himself the Enlightened and made countless millions for scores of centuries accept his assessment as valid and worth bothering about. And the fact that even women should have acquiesced in all this is the absolute limit. After all, to attain *nirvan*, the Buddh had to be *born*, even if for the final time, as son of *woman*; had seen beauty after beauty before choosing Yashodhra; had lived with her as a man with woman and begot a son from her; and been served by Sujata, a woman, and Ambapali, a woman, and countless such. Again, the Buddh shut his eyes to the process of procreation from union of male and female, "down to the ants", which apparently went on during the forty-four years or so of his post-enlightenment sojourn upon earth, and chose to ignore what Nature taught. But, he had read the books containing earlier thoughts on the subject. A glance at the Rigved reveals that a man may desire and a woman refuse, exactly as Rati, Rag and Tanha desired and the Buddh rejected them. If Yami could not persuade Yam, who once a paramour would now be sinless, to take to Kam's way, nor could Pururavas persuade Urvashi, who had once been his, to do that. As to opinions, high or low, about woman, her place and status, use and abuse, nothing

new had been found. Codification might have occurred later, but her position and duties were well-known: "The duties of woman are created in the rites of wedding, when in presence of the nuptial fire she becomes the associate of her Lord, for the performance of all righteous deeds. She should be beautiful and gentle, considering her husband as her god and serving him as such in fortune and misfortune, health and sickness, obedient even if commanded to unrighteous deeds or acts that may lead to her own destruction. She should rise early, serving the gods, always keeping her house clean, tending to the domestic sacred fire, eating only after the needs of gods and guests and servants have been satisfied, devoted to her father and mother and the father and mother of her husband. Devotion to her Lord is woman's honor, it is her eternal heaven."[8] Her business was to gladden her husband, "who must be constantly worshipped by her as a god even though destitute of virtue or seeking pleasure elsewhere, or devoid of good qualities!"[9] And the decree that "Where women are not honoured, the gods do not dwell," must have become necessary only in a society where they were *not* honoured. Nevertheless, 'a *yagya* was not complete, nor a sacrifice correct, unless both wife and husband had performed it. Again, we have texts galore where she is bracketed with animals or goods and chattels, and required to be treated thus. Indeed, adultery—not rape—which cannot be committed except by two, continues to be, in many countries, sin for both but crime only for the man, since he has stolen another man's wife and infringed another's right to property.

The reason for this terrible mess man has made of his view of and approach to woman is because it has been a male's world largely. Handicapped as the female of the species was through Nature's decision that it is she who must conceive and bear, woman had little choice. Otherwise, for her man is as much

a tempter as she is for him, as much of the dog-to-god, and sin-to-salvation stuff as she for him. If Science can remove this handicap, as it is on its way to doing, woman might choose to take her revenge on man and the Manus and the Buddhs of the world will have cause to grieve ! And we might note, in passing, that half the reason, for all the nonsense talked and established against woman is the fact that it was the Manus and the Buddhs who were doing the propaganda, who spoke and wrote. Man was giving *his* opinion. Woman, wiser and knowing her handicaps but also her real power, kept quiet. Now she is finding her strength in the external world also, and the danger today is that a She-Buddh might arise, and conquer a Modern Mar whose final weapons are some male counterparts of Rati, Rag, and Tanha, and refuse to admit men into her Order.

But we were speaking of a period nearly two thousand and five hundred years in the Past, when it was possible to treat woman as she was treated, and for Life and Woman to show even then that Nature would not be, just could not be, cheated. The seed for this had been sown, even before the Buddh's death; and women were back into the world. They had come back as nuns, but then for Nature nuns are women, even as monks are but men. And shall fuel and flame be brought together and the consequence avoided ? No; nor was it avoided. And even before the five hundred years—for which the Buddh had said the Dharm would endure—were over, the monks and nuns must have invented rhyme and reason for *agape* of the Christians. Love, mystic or not so mystic, brotherly-sisterly, and monkly-nunly, is love all the same. Heloise began her celebrated letter to Abelard thus : To her master, nay father, to her husband, nay brother ; his handmaid, nay daughter, his spouse, nay sister : to Abelard, Heloise. And so what ? Myths of creation all the world over indicate that Nature does not recognise sexual morality, which human organisations

found it necessary to swear by. The Buddh forgot that his path was that of the "golden mean"—and that either he should have himself allowed that to be the way between the monks and nuns, too, or, worse would follow.

The worse did. May be the monks and nuns kept to their monastries and nunneries, and nothing but virtue reigned in the world of the homeless. But repression could not long be endured, and imagination ran riot. Passion mounted into the intellect and philosophies were worked out and dogma preached which, in course of time, took the swing to the other extreme. And this began to appear even in art, and almost to a day after the five hundred years the Buddh had said the Dharm would last for.

Ashok, having embraced Buddhism, had, both for Master's glory and his own, started building up stupas and setting up pillars proclaiming the Law. Built as mounds of commemoration, the stupas carried plenty of decorative element which consisted chiefly, nay in the beginning, wholly, of depiction of episodes from the life of the Buddh. Women were evil, but, they might adore. And the adoring women could then be made beautiful. Indeed, the more beautiful, the better for they were, in a way, laying their best gift, even of beauty, on the Master's feet. And so, soon, very soon, the railings at one stupa would carry a lovely female figure, or someone would adorn a gateway, and in sheer forgetfulness, or because, she was not a woman, but a tree-spirit, might reveal her sex too. Woman came back at Bharhut and sex was revealed at Sanchi. The artists of Ajanta were not thinking, let us say, of the loveliness of the female, but merely this that, if daughters of Mar had to be delineated, they had to be personifications of all that allures. And so coming singly and then in groups, and being lovely and then ravishingly so, women were back into the world of men. Soon the couples would appear, first as donor couples, and not very wonderful

to look at, who might have vowed to stay chaste after the *chaity* had been built and dedicated; and the Gandharv couples who did not count, since they were not mortals, and it was the mortal who had to beware of pairing.

Further aid was now sought from Philosophy and Religion, to sanction that which the long-starved lips and loins longed for. By this time, two very significant developments had taken place. India had begun to rethink and Hinduism was rearing its head to strike a deadly blow at this Life-rejecting, negative and pessimistic philosophy called Buddhism. The call of the Flute of Krishn was not yet; nevertheless, the *sansar*, which even the Buddh had not been able to resist, was not Nay but Yea. Secondly, the Buddhists themselves had started debating over the dogma, and had divided themselves into different schools. One of these, *Hinyan*, the Little Vehicle, believed in the razor's-edge sharpness in respect of adherence to the original creed. Another, *Mahayan*, the Broad Vehicle, began to believe in and to tread the prim-rose path of dalliance—broad, but, in this case, leading not to hell but to heaven.

It is the first steps which are difficult to take. Thereafter progress can be fast. In the matter of Mahayan thinking it was fast, indeed. Finding that men had to be weaned away from Buddhism, Hinduism was already offering tempting philosophies. Innumerable gods and goddesses were being added to the Hindu pantheon. Their heavens were pictured as full of apsaras and gandharvas and those who had attained these heavens through worship of the divinities. And life in these heavens was one unceasing round of love and laughter, dance and music, and wine and roses! The people were encouraged to take to simpler beliefs and easier ways of attaining salvation. Instead of the older method of *yog*, which involved penance and hardhip, and learning not within reach of ordinary minds, worship of the gods and goddesses

had come into vogue. *Mahayan* followed suit, and let fancy fabricate so many myths and legends about the Buddh, especially about his earlier lives, that for sheer imagination nothing can beat their work. The Buddh was given a wife-goddess, Buddhi, Pragya, and made to go through so much of pleasure-seeking and love-making in his earlier lives that all that seemed pious. Finally, a whole system was evolved, the Tantrik creed, which is common to both Hinduism and Buddhism, and which made *bhog*, enjoyment, a form of *yog*, union. Like the moth to the flame, the male was attracted to the female, and the female desired union with the male. How to sanctify that? The easiest way was to invent a goddess, and let the god and goddess be like halves of the cosmic shell, part of each other; nay, each, the other. In the abstract, it was all right, so Pragya, Wisdom, could be the goddess sharing Buddhhood. And just as the gods and goddesses had been made incarnate that the people might find it easier to worship them, so other abstractions of faith were likewise incarnated, and the embrace and union of the Buddh and Buddhi, an intellectual or mystic experience so far, was brought down to the level of the physical. Ritual was devised which made each woman a goddess and each man a god—at least for the time of worship, and their union was holy. Such was the process. Woman was made goddess, sin was taken out of the act, and love and life were back into the world of man. The temples of India began to show the progress made in the social life, and the country's thought. Kam, exiled for a while, was back at work, and busy making up for lost time. In the course of the next thousand years, the erotic sentiment so overpowered the society that poetry and drama talked of nothing else; and books on the art and science of love were written by the score; and sculpture beat them all—for it put the religious formulas and the social attitudes, and the lessons in the art and science of love, all these and whatever else it could

think up as variations on the theme, on the walls of the temples. And put it so beautifally, so boldly, so spiritually, so serenly that the carnal became clean and sex was made sacred. Life had won and woman restored to her rightful position: the second half of man, nay the better half, the goddess! She was ready to be the good wife as ever, and faithful and worshipful but now was herself to be addressed and treated thus: "Thou that dost know the Self and the not-Self, expert in every work: endowed with self-restraint and perfect same-sightedness towards every creature; free from the sense of I and my—thy power and energy are equal to my own, and thou hast practised the most severe discipline. O Daughter of Himalaya, of fairest eyebrows, and whose hair ends in the fairest curls, expound to me the duties of women in full."[10] We have already had the answer above. And it is this mutual love and adoration which created a new creed and philosophy of joy in love. Now, at last the erotic puzzle which had baffled the sages including the Buddh had been solved. The antipathy between Shiv and *Kam*, the conflict between passion and penance, was over. The Cult of Desire was on. And a new era began in which love-making was ritual, and the road to release lay in the Supreme Delight of Dalliance.

5. Lalita

"Having gathered the tiniest speck of dust of Thy lotus-like feet, Brahma creates the worlds, leaving nothing to be desired; Vishnu carries the same with much effort on his thousand heads; while Shiv, disintegrating the same, smears (his body) with it, as though with ashes."

SAUNDARY-LAHRI

THE erotic sculpture of India is a part of a very much larger manifestation of the erotic element in the art and life, and religion and philosophy of an entire people during fifteen hundred years or so of their history. A phenomenon, which attracts attention even of the moderns who are, or, ought to be, familiar with the idea that sex is all-pervading, could not but challenge thought and questioning by those who saw the art and science of the Bed portrayed on the Temple. Several theories were formulated, and a score of explanations given for all this. Some of these latter are too crude and facile to be taken seriously. It is maintained, for example, that erotic sculpture counter-acts the effect of the evil eye, or protects the building from destruction through lightning, may be, because Indr, Lord of the Thunderbolt, and himself a great voluptuary, will not damage what is but a replica upon earth of his own heaven and its activities. In a case or two, the explanations have reference only to a particular place or deity. For instance, it is stated in respect of the sanctuaries at

Khajuraho that it was the ancestress of the Chandel dynasty, Hemvati, who built these temples and had obscenities carved thereon as ceremonial expiation of her sinful liaison with the Moon-god from which liaison the sage-king Chandratrey, first of the Chandels, had come into being. Obviously this legend cannot cover the Sun-temples at Konark or Modhera. The erotic sculpture found at these places, or upon a Sun-temple anywhere, is explained in another way. Drawing his magnificent chariot, the coursers of the Sun carry him through the skies, and all that the deity sees on his journey is sculpted on the temples dedicated to him. Since sexual activity is part of life, and indulged in upon earth fairly extensively, naturally, this too must have a place in the temple's total message or decoration. Similarly, the explanation that in a world in which the printing press was not yet, and where the temple was school as well as parliament, the erotic sculpture was society's attempt to educate the people in sex-hygiene may point to the existence of a highly laudable aim and indicate that the Hindu had a very sane and balanced view of sex, but does not explain away all that is found as erotic sculpture. Again, to say that Art, religious art, certainly, carved out what Religion desired, or that the texts, the *shilpshastrs*, decreed that erotic figures be carved on temples, and the *shilpi*, maker of the images, carried out the behest, is to avoid the issue; and even if that were the case, this merely passes the baby on to someone else. The same applies to the explanation that the erotic sculpture portrays the philosophy and activities of a certain sect or sects, and constitutes a set of psychophysical exercises of the Aryan School or sexo-spiritual practices of the Tantriks.

Of course, moving even one step towards that which might explain, moving away from the secondary and the subsidiary, and to the primary, helps. And certainly we do start getting nearer the truth in an explanation like the one given for Sun-temples. Likewise,

when we observe that the sculptures occupy a certain place, are on the outside of the temple, and in the subsidiary components of the structure, but never in the *garbh-grih*, the cella, where the deity's image is set; or that, upon the wall, sexual activity of the bestial and orgaistic type is placed as friezes near the base, or that as tiers rise upon tiers of sculpture, the erotic becomes less earthy and more and more mystical, and divinish, if not divine, we are already walking upon good philosophic ground. In the former case, the explanation is that the poses of love's pleasure are placed outside to indicate to the devotee that he must forgo all that—*arth* and *kam*—if he or she wishes to meet the deity—*dharm* and *moksh*—within. Another variation of this explanation is that the initiate is being tested, and tempted to go back to the world which offers him all those attractions. As to the placing of the images on the wall, they are arranged in such a way that as they rise vertically they show the nature of the people involved, and we learn how different categories of living beings react to the same hunger and need. All beings, whether of beastly and semi-beastly nature, or who are divine and semi-divine, and ordinary persons, of course, are all caught in the noose of Kam, and none may escape him. Yet, the expression and manifestation of desire and its fulfilment will differ in each case, and we can see the difference clearly portrayed in the fantastic and fascinating world of art. Art may be experience recalled or anticipated, history or imagination, fancy repressed or frustrated libido, but surely more than all these, and at its highest, the Beautiful is another mode of expressing the True, and both these partake of the same Essence as the Good. *Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram*—the True, the Good and the Beautiful, and all these but aspects of the same God Everlasting—is the Hindu's formula as well as that of many another religion and philosophy. Wherever each is, others will be, somewhere around; and each and all three

and these alone are Real. All else is unreal, illusory, sinful, dark and misery-yielding. Howsoever alluring in appearance, and sweet in the first taste, in the end, all such things and phenomena prove false and bitter, and full of woe.

And it was as false and bitter and full of woe, that life and body and woman had begun to be thought of by the Buddhist. The Buddhist shunned beauty and for him the body was unholy, and women low creatures and allies of the arch enemy, Desire. For the first few centuries after the Buddh's passing away, this sorry scheme of things was tolerated, but then the untruth of all this became obvious, and a reaction began. For another few centuries, there was a struggle between Nature and the new Culture, and Brahmanism, against which the Buddh had revolted, joined the former. The old Vedic deities, themselves representing forces of Nature, were given a new look and the pantheon refashioned to combat the mighty challenge of Buddhism. By the 4th century A.D., Buddhism was already on the decline in the country of its origin, and a new faith—new yet old for it was based on the old, Brahmanic, Vedic and even pre-Vedic beliefs and thought—Hinduism emerged. Both wise and cunning, Hinduism learnt a few lessons from History, It also borrowed some good material from Buddhism, and wove it into its own pattern. In course of time, this new faith was to grow into a great forest which contained everything, so that it would never be necessary for any one to turn away from it, since whatever was to be found anywhere else, was to be found here, too. No doubt, all this created a great deal of confusion and self-contradiction, but that problem was solved in a very simple way by evolving the multiform from the Formless by producing an enternity of images of Self as Existence. Henceforth the Hindu deity could always say and say it honestly, that those who worshipped the other gods also worshipped Him !

Let us now cast a glance at the lessons which the Brahmanic

faith had learnt and see how it had vanquished the vanquisher. Discerning a logical flaw in the life of the Buddh, and seeing that his return to *Sansar* was defeat by Desire in the form of pity for mankind and the *desire* to show others the path, they knew that the world would endure. But nothing was now to be taken for granted. They, therefore, set out to repair the broken and to rectify the defective in the human set-up, and to make the world in God's image, and give it something that would help it last for ever. Starting with the Buddhist view that desire was the root cause, and ignorance the chief evil, and woman, who represented both desire and ignorance, man's real weakness, they saw that the solution lay in regarding woman as wisdom and not ignorance, as power and not weakness, as the First cause, and not the second, and in equating *Nirvan* itself with *Sansar*. All religions understand and exploit human psychology, and know that we readily believe that which we want to believe, that nothing is accepted as divine revelation with greater speed and better grace than that which the blood within us lusts after. Man desires to live, and desires woman. Sanctify life, sanctify woman, and all will be well. Convert one into Goddess, into Bliss incarnate, into the Goal and make desire the means to reach the Goal. Then sex would become sacred, the embrace regarded as the symbol of union of the human with the Divine, and life would be holy, automatically. Make woman sacred, whether as virgin, wife or mother, make her goddess--that became the cry. Let there be goddesses galore, let each woman be a goddess—that was the injunction. And since the earlier faiths had made 'Him' *Parbrahm*, the Supreme, let Her be the Supreme of the Supreme. Accordingly, that she was made. Not "that Thou art," but "She I am", became the new slogan.

And so, woman became *Devi*, nay *Devi* of *Devis*, *Mahadevi*, and *Tripursundari*, and *Lalita*, the Most Beautiful, the Playful who, from her rose-red desire to create, makes the world. Hymns,

great and glorious hymns, were made and sung in her praise. Here is one from the Devi Bhagvat Puran which makes her the Greatest of all the deities:

It is by Thy power only
That Brahma creates, Vishnu maintains,
And at the end of things Shiv destroys the Universe.
Powerless are they for this but by Thy help.
Therefore it is that Thou alone are the Creatrix,
Maintainer, and Destructress of the world.

Possessing a thousand names and more, the Devi is Tripursundari, for she is the Spouse of Shiv, who as Parshiv is Tripur, because he has three purs in Him, His body becoming triple upon the manifestation therein of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiv. In a famous hymn Shankarachary sings of the Power and Beauty of "the charmer of the enemy of the God of Love":

"I seek refuge with Tripursundari,
Who wanders in the Kadamb forest;
The spouse of the Three-eyed One,
Who is served by celestial women,
Whose eyes are like the newly blown lotus,
Whose breasts are garlanded with glittering gems.
Whose breasts are rising,
And excel the mountain in greatness;
Whose cheeks are flushed with wine,
Ever singing sweet songs; the playful one, dark as a cloud,
Ever compassionate to all.
I worship the World-Mother
Who is served by celestial women,
The Spouse of Indra,
Skilful in plaiting hair;
The devoted Spouse of Brahma,
Anointed with sandal paste;

The Spouse of Vishnu,
Adorned with pleasing ornaments.

And again, in the Anand Lahri, which most scholars ascribe to him :

"O Devi, how can we speak of Thy qualities,
Which are not to be described by any Nigama ;
As the sweetness of ghee, milk, the grape, and honey
Cannot be distinguished and described by words,
But may be perceived by the tongue only;
In like manner Thy beauty can be seen only by the eyes of Parameshvar.
Thou art the Mother of all Vedas,
The regulator of all dharmas
And the root of all wealth—
Thou whose lotus feet are worshipped even by the wealthgiver.
O Mother ! Thou art the primal cause of all desires.
Victrix of Kandarpa, 'Thou art the seed of liberation for the good.
Thou art the Spouse of the Parbrahman.
O virtuous One, from the corner of Thine eyes
Cast now a glance of kindness upon me;
Neglect to do so is not proper on Thy part,
Seeing that I have reached the refuge of Thy initiation.
Alas ! if the creeper of desire, whose very name shows that it gives desire,
Yet cannot give that which is desired,
What difference is there between it and any other common creeper ?"

But it is as Lalita, "She who plays and creates the world which is Her play," that she is directly connected with our study. The following verses define and describe her:

"May the great Lord, who is ever wakeful in the blissful play

of the repeated acts of Creation, Maintenance and Dissolution of all the worlds which issue from Him, protect ye. He is mere illumination (Prakasa). Merged in Him is Vimarsh (Shakti).

"She the Primordial Shakti who excels all and who in Her own true nature of eternal, limitless Bliss, is the seed (*Bij*, that is, source or cause) of all the moving and motionless things which are to be, and is the Pure Mirror in which Shiv experiences Himself.

"She (who is) Devi *Tripursundari* abides in the *Bindumayachakr*. (There) She is seated in the lap of Kameshvar. a digit of the moon is placed by Her as an adornment on Her forehead. She holds in Her hands the noose, the goad, the sugarcane bow and the five flowery arrows. She is red like the rising sun. The Moon, the Sun and the Fire are Her three eyes."[1]

The *Bindumayachakr* refers to the Yantr of the Devi. Each goddess has her own *tantr*, *yantr* and *mantr* and she has to be worshipped according to prescribed ritual. The highest yantr of all is naturally that of the Highest, of the Goddess. A reference to this, known as the *Shri-yantr*, will help us, not only to understand a little about the Devi, *Lalita*, but also to form an idea of the complexity of thought and meaning which may be found in a single item of the vast Tantric philosophy. It is described in great detail in the *Tantr-raj Tantr*. The red central dot in the *Chakr* is the Devi *Lalita*. She is red, the colour of passion, of *Rag*. On the awakening of desire, Devi manifests herself in the form of Creation. The first triangle—symbol of *yoni*—stands for the Devi Kameshwari's union with Kameshwar ; that is, for *Kamkala*. The rest of the *yantr* is *Kamkalavilas*, "the emanation or evolution of the Kamkala that is the supreme triangle formed of the *Bindu* and *Visarg*, of *Prakash* and *Vimarsh*, of Shiv and Shakti."

Kamkala, then, is the love-play of Shakti and Shiv, and the universe its further manifestation. In his preface to *Kamkala Vilas*,

John Woodroffe, great scholar-editor of several Tantrik texts, states: "Kamakalavillas is the evolution of the One in its twin aspect at changeless Consciousness and changing Power into the multiple universe. Sriyantra which extends through its several cakras from the Point of Bindu, the Supreme Siva-Sakti in the centre, to the outermost section of the Cakras the Bhupura which is called Trailokyamohana.

"The Sricakra or Sriyantra is the Yantra of Lalita or Tripura-sundari..... the Supreme Shakti aspect of the Brahman .....the first display of activity in the Brahman Substance after Pralay when the Devi holds absorbed in Herself all the Thirty-six Tattvas of which the Universe in all its variety is composed. She remains for some time in this state holding within Herself all the Tattvas until rest is disturbed by the desire or will to create. The movement or stress of this Desire manifests as the Kamakala......The Gandharva-Tantra, speaks of the three aspects of Kamakala. The first aspect is, it says, the Sthula or gross aspect—that in which She is meditated upon as something outside the Sadhaka .....The second aspect of Kamakala which is spoken of as Subtle and inward is that in which She is the Devi Kundalini like a luminous flash of lightning extended from the Muladhara through the six centres to the Brahmanadhra. She is to be meditated upon as half of Ha in the lotus of a thousand petals. This Kamalaka is also active in all that is moving and motionless. The third aspect of Kamalaka is called Mantratanu also Trayimayi as existing in everything. In this aspect Samaveda is Her face. Rk and Yajus are Her two breasts and the Atharva veda is the Hardhakala. 'The Kamakala is the one highest Brahman Itself.' The Tantra-raj Tantra speaks of one Bindu as the state of Laya; two Bindus as the state of creation; three Bindus as the state of continuance, and the return to One Bindu as the state of Laya."

And, finally, "the aim of the sadhaka of Lalita is to realise his

dentity first with the Yantra and Mantra and then with Lalita or Tripura, the Mahasakti Who is the creator and director of the universe and Who ultimately withdraws creation within Herself. Lalita is the Brahman as the active principle in creation. When Her Power is fully evolved the Sakta seeks Her alone. It is She Who, visible through Her Manifestations, counts for him."[2]

One could go on indefinitely, for this "Shrividya", knowledge of Shri, the Goddess, is, like Herself, endless. As to the *mantrs* it is not only that each goddess has her own *mantr* but each *mantr*, mystic formula, may require specifically that the corresponding *yantr* he inscribed on this or that material. Thus the *Saundary Lahri* gives among other things the mystic formulas and their corresponding diagrams and food offerings. And if properly worshipped, the Devi grants separate boons for each mantr—all of which remind one of the charms of the Atharv-ved. Thus if one desires to fascinate a particular woman, the Goddess should be worshipped by the Sadhak, who should hold a champak flower to be given later to the woman he desires, through the sixty-ninth stanza repeated 1000 times daily for forty-five days. For this *mantr*, the *yantr* should be inscribed on a gold plate and honey should be offered as food to the deity, Likewise No. 70 will help fascinate men. Others cover an astonishingly extensive range. One may bewitch kings, demons, animals and women; gain royal favour or relief from diseases, debts and dangers ; win over the enemy or attain knowledge of self; achieve success in business or foresee the future through dreams; and so on. It is a fascinating study, indeed, this science and scope of the *mantrs*, and if the Goddess can fulfil, all this, verily she is *Kalptaru*, the very tree of fulfilment. That she is, for as the personification of Desire, she grants and gratifies all desires, and delights in making her worshippers happy.

With all this evolved, there was no question of the body being regarded as vile and love-making as wicked. Indeed, when the

great reaction set in, the earlier vileness was, in this case also, remedied by deifying the reviled. The body became holy, temple of the soul, residence of the gods, a place of pilgrimage. Once considered by them to be a source of sin and pain, now it was declared by the Buddhists as well as the Hindus as the 'most reliable and effective instrument at man's disposal for conquering death," and "an aid to meditation and liberation." The changed view is summarised by Saraha: "Here (within the body) is the Ganga and the Jumna, here the Ganga-sagara, here are Prayag and Benaras—here the sun and the moon. Here are the sacred places, here the *pithas* and the *upa-pithas*. I have not seen a place of pilgrimage and an abode of bliss like my body"......; and, again, "He is within the house—but you are enquiring, about him outside"; and, "Some one bodiless is hiding himself in the body—he who knows Him there (in the body) is liberated."[3]

Once the theory had been clearly understood, its working out was a comparatively simple affair. All that was needed was simile and metaphor, myth and fancy, hymn and poetry—and in these embellishments, as in the realm of abstract thought, none can beat the Indian. A complex cult speedily sprang up—that of Shakti in which the worship of the goddess was the main element. Gently, gently, subtly but softly, along the Spring-breeze path of Desire, was Man led back to Woman, to Woman as Goddess, to Woman as Wisdom and Beauty, and as the personification of *Anand*, Bliss, that joy ineffable of which the wise and the learned once spoke with reference to Him, to *Sachidanand*. There is always room at the top, and the hymns of the Rigved indicated it clearly: 'Perhaps he knows not', thus in the 'Song of Creation.' Then, who was before? Why, of course, She! "That I am, She am I"! said the Goddess, "I am Lalita, and the world is my play. I am the Mother, and the Father I, and all things animate and inanimate and all things beautiful, all things

desirable and all things joyous. I am the Self and as when a man seeth himself in the mirror, and another self appears, so I have created all these countless selves that are the living beings, and they are Me. Shun not, embrace each other, good children, part of the same soul, and no sin will attach, for what sin can there be if Self embraces Self, if the Goddess embraces the Goddess. Worship me rightly and know thyselves as Me—doubt not, live freely, for life is Me ; love freely, for Love is Me ; enjoy yourself for I am Enjoyment ; believe in *bhog* for where all is the same, *bhog* is *yog*. Worship me—and that is all the penance I want. Live and Love, eat, drink and take delight in the world I have created—that is all the sacrifice I require. For I am Life and he who lives well worships me truly".

Believing that the easiest way to get over a temptation was to yield to it, the makers of the new philosophies taught that poison could be the antidote of poison, and passion its own cure. And since they knew that for a creed to succeed, the essence should be simple but ritual elaborate, they devised a complex system of many a *tantr*, *yantr* and *mantr*. Of *yantr* and *mantr* we have already taken some note. The *tantr* will come up in the next chapter.

This entire philosophy woven round the concept of Shakti is so subtle-seeming and lofty-sounding that if what is claimed for it is all true, few things could be higher in religious thought than this amalgam of *yog* and mystic eroticism; and, if false, nothing could be more fraudulent and injurious. Ranging between the bestial and the divine, and mixing flesh and spirit as wine and water, it caters to all levels of seekers, and offers a choice from several types of *sadhna*—way and method for attaining *sidhi*—success, perfection, liberation-in-life. The people are divided into classes according to their temperament and qualities—or lack of them; and there are various stages of the *sadhna*. While the

perfect may have all licence, the others have to observe restrictions. And yet the text for all is the same, so that the same words will have different meanings for different people. Now, there is in theory no harm in all this; but in practice the texts can be made into pretexts for doing that which was *not* the intention of those who set them down. Thus, the five items which are compulsory accessories for ritual and worship, the five M's as they are called, are for one follower what they ordinarily stand for, for another merely symbols and metaphors. *Mans*—flesh; *mats*—fish; *madya*—wine; *mudra*—dance or parched grain; and *maithun*—copulation, these are taken literally by some, and eaten, drunk or done as ritual. For others, they constitute language of high metaphysics and names for yogic operations. We shall revert to these distinctions in the next chapter, but let us observe here that this is one explanation of the phenomenon of erotic sculpture, and its highest interpretation. The display of sexual activity on temple walls is symbolic language of some sect which, through these sculptures, is teaching the highest philosophy—of *Mahasukh*, Great Delight, of Anand, Bliss beyond which there is naught, which is *mahanirvan* and *mukti*, total release and complete salvation in one final embrace, of the made with the Maker, the seeker with the Sought, the *sadhak* with the Devi, play with the Player, earthly beauty with Divine Beauty, the ripple of joy which is life with the Ocean of Bliss—from which it emanated!

"From joy springs all this creation, by joy it is sustained, towards joy it moves, and into joy it enters", so say the Scriptures. This achieved, Life, which had come to mean sorrow and suffering and sin under Buddhism was washed clean and made whole and turned into Beauty and Bliss : *Tripursundari*. It is in her embrace that even the highest of gods must seek and find their life, joy and salvation. The boon graciously granted by the Goddess was that even *mortals* may seek and find that life,

joy and salvation in the same way. It was along such a road that Kam came back and Desire became *dharm*, became the Law, and piety, and provided the world's most celebrated way to salvation, the way of wine and roses and love and laughter. As the *Bhikshu* in Krishn Mishr's *Prabodh-Chandrody* says : "How excellent is the religion . . . which grants both sensual enjoyments and eternal felicity; it permits us to inhabit elegant houses and to possess women obedient to our will; it removes the restrictions as to the time of eating; it allows us to recline on soft beds and to pass the shining moon-light night in amours with young damsels."

The Cult of Desire was on, the cult of worship of the flesh and through the flesh, and the Soul was out to embrace the Body.

6. The Philosophy of Mahasukh

"As a man in the embrace of his beloved wife forgets everything that is without, everything that is within; so one, in the embrace of the knowing Self, forgets everything that is without, everything that is within; for there all desires are satisfied, Self is sole desire."

BRIHAD-ARANYAK UPNISHAD

IT is generally overlooked that the so-called erotic sculpture of India is a part of the total decoration of the temple. No temple carries *only* erotic sculpture. And the erotic sculpture is there, as a part of the whole, because, as in life, so in the way of life which Hindu religion is, and, as in religion, so in art which is but a way of religion, passion has a place. It is important, therefore, that the erotic should not be torn out of context and viewed as a phenomenon existing all by itself. Indeed, for the temple-builders, there was nothing extra-ordinary about this part of their work. The entire development was gradual, and spread over several centuries. To arrive at the stage of full-flowering in temples like, shall we say, those of Khajuraho, the seed, sown at Bharhut and Sanchi, had taken more than a thousand years. This makes it the work of generations upon generations of artists, so that at its respective stage the activity of a given group of sculptors meant no more than reflecting their own time and society. Art is seldom a leader. On the contrary, it is, usually a

cautious follower; and since architecture and sculpture are, in a sense, slow arts, the artists connected with these are usually far behind the times. We have but to refer to the scriptures of the period, and to the poetry and prose, and we shall find that the erotic in sculpture is but a pale shadow of what these others offer. Not belonging to the times, nor imbued with their spirit, we feel the impact of the sculpture the more strongly because we do not read the scriptures nor study literature and other arts of the age to which the sculpture we see pertains. And so, starting with a partial view of the matter, we reach wrong conclusions and make incorrect assessments.

In a proper study of the erotic sculpture, this then is the first point to remember: that it is a part of the whole and must be examined as such. And, now, and bearing that in mind, let us take it out of its context, for a while at least, so that we can have a laboratory-analysis, find out the components and ingredients, and understand and evaluate the force or forces, gravitational and adhesive, by which the components are compounded and crystallised into the forms and patterns we meet with.

At its maturity the erotic sculpture of India may be divided into four categories. There is, first of all, the beautiful female, youthful, lovely and desirable in the extreme, and the light and ornament of the temple, the House of God, just as she should be the light and ornament of any other house. Then there are couples, of human beings or divine, whom we find portrayed in serene and blissful company of each other—or, at best, in gentle embrace. Thirdly, there are *mithuns* which though passionate and expressive of scarlet desire, are not objectionable. The fourth variety is that of the shockingly obscene and highly complicated poses. This last has generally to be explained, and is explained as a lesson that this kind of disgusting and unnatural love-making, in the pair and in the herd, one man to three women or one woman to three men,

and in all manner of unnatural postures, should not be indulged in; or as a secret language in which the various sculptures are symbols of an intricate message; or, as proof that an age of degeneration and loose living had begun; or, finally, as something which has reference to Tantric thought and worship, and to what is known as the Philosophy of Mahasukh.

In respect of the first category, that of the lovely female whether woman, *apsara* or goddess, we have already said something. The fine array of alluring females, the congregation of feminine charms, the sculpting of womanly beauty at the spring-time of life, when *Kam* and his friend spring are bee-busy with scattering flowers and flowery arrows of love and desire, all this represents a simple thing : the return of woman to the world of man from which the Buddh had sought to turn her out. Contrary to what he had thought, it was now being asserted that far from being God's blunder, and a symbol of darkness and error, she constituted all the wonder and virtue, all the light and delight of life—and was worthy of the highest worship. A new cult had arisen with *striyo devah striyah pranah*—women are gods, women are life—as its slogan. Woman had grown into a goddess and the goddess had become Goddess, Supreme of the Supreme. Herself the very flood and fountain of beauty, the Goddess exists in all beauteous forms :

> "*To the Devi existing in the form of beauty in all beings,*
> *Reverence to Her, reverence to Her.*"[1]

Indeed, it is from the dust of her feet and her bathing-water that the most alluring of woman-kind, the *Apsaras* of Indr's heaven, are created :

> "*O Bhagvati, the Creator having with his own hands*
> *taken Thy bathing water*
> *Mingled with liquid sandal, musk, safron, and flowers,*
> *And the dust of Thy moving feet,*

Created therewith the lotus-eyed women of the
city of the Devas."[2]

As the personification of Beauty as well as Passion, the Goddess is delineated in countless songs and scriptural descriptions, in great detail, with each limb and part receiving uninhibited praise and attention. Finally, and although she is the Mother of the Universe, the Goddess should be meditated upon, so it is enjoined upon the *sadhak*, in her first bloom:

"I take refuge with Tripurasundari
The spouse of the Three-eyed One,
who should be meditated upon as in the
first flush of her nubile youth."[3]

And,

"O Gauri ! with all my heart
I contemplate Thy form,
Beauteous of face,
With its weight of hanging hair,
With full breasts and rounded slender waist."[4]

And,

"I remember again and again the dark primeval Devi
swayed with passion,
Her beauteous face heated and moist with the sweat
(of amorous play)."

And since an important attribute of the Devi—Parvati—is her chastity—her penance for Shiv's hand showed the Brahmcharni's power which could vanquish even Him who had vanquished the god of Love, himself—She is worshipped as *kanya*, as *kumari*. As Uma, the unmarried, She is the energy of desire. She thus resides in all *kumaris*, and the worship of the maidens is today a fairly familiar feature of the Hindu religion. The Devi is *kumari* in another sense also. Shankarachary says : "As play She creates the universe, hence, She is Kumari, or She destroys *(marayate)* the ground (*ku*) of the

great illusion, hence She is Kumari. Kumari is the enjoyer and not to be enjoyed, as She is one with the Yogi, the enjoyer." All this clearly brings out the reason for the presence of the beautiful female, and even if *devdasis* were there on hand as models, it was but men who were giving expression to their now freely allowed love of feminine youth and beauty. On the other hand, there can be no mistaking the spiritual content and the familiar motif of Kanya-and-Yogi is associated with the cosmic romance of Parvati and Shiv. But we are already talking of the couple, even if the Cosmic Couple.

The clean *mithun*-sculptures are a healthy and joyous sight. They symbolise the re-affirmation of sex as the light of life, as the life of life. Thanks to Buddhism, sexual union—guarantee of the continuity of the species—had become all but taboo and was regarded, at best, as a necessary evil. Now by engaging themselves in this activity, the gods were but showing the path to man, were removing the inhibitive from the natural, were making it wholesome, health-yielding, joyful and life-prolonging, were sanctifying the act. We shall presently see that the sexual union was not just sanctified; it was raised to godhead, and stood not for the way to joy and to salvation, but for joy and salvation themselves.

With every *kumari*—maiden—regarded as the reflection of the Goddess, and the union as the symbol of *mukti* and *anand*, salvation and bliss, the youthful female and the loving couple are not difficult to explain. They are met with outside the temple sculpture also. In beautiful bronze, and in clay and ivory, we come across some ravishingly lovely pieces which show the love of art and art of love so well blended that one cannot but admire each of these in turn.

The first two of the categories of erotic sculpture which we have enumerated above are, therefore, easily understandable. The new cult directly encouraged the creed of beauty and worship of

women, and we find galaxy after galaxy of *apsaras* and youthful, beautiful, playful *kanyas*, in their own right or as manifestations of the Goddess. They are the symbol of Desire, symbol of Spring who is friend of Kam, and, therefore, of erotic activity. Looking at them one thinks not of Death 'walking on two legs' but, rather, of the sparkle of life and the sheen of joy. Again, since sex was now no longer something morbid and unholy ; nay, was positively sacred ; therefore, the second category of sculptures depicting normal, clean and serene sex-play, whether between gods and goddesses or men and women, is equally easy to understand. It is only when we proceed to the bewildering variety and to the prolific display of erotic activity, that we get on to more uncertain ground.

According to one view, the great quantity of erotic sculpture might mean that a sermon on sex-hygiene was being written in stone. The science of love had already developed along elaborate lines and detailed and scholarly studies were available. These portrayed an incredible range and variety of love-making. Like all knowledge, the science of love also claimed a divine origin, for it had sprung from the shoulders of the Devi, who is *Sarvagya*, and *Shastrmayi*, is all the learning and all the books of knowledge. The Brahma Puran says that from Her breath came the Vedas; from the tip of Her throat Mimansa, etc, from the bottom of Her throat the sixty-four sciences; from the rest of Her limbs all other Tantras; and from Her shoulders the science of love. The celebrated Kam Sutr of Vatsyayan—itself a fairly elaborate work—is merely a very brief summary of the vast literature on the science of love beginning with the divine source referred to above. Even so, Vatsyayan gives seven hundred and twenty-nine varieties of the kiss. He treats the sexual act likewise and there are many descriptions and details. And, therefore, if the idea was to depict the art and science of love on the walls of the temples, one could not shirk from putting it

whole. Kam was emphasised in the new scriptures and myths; and because once it had been degraded out of proportion, now it received more homage than any other aim of life.

Apart from teaching the right way of love, generally, possibly an added motive was to excite people into the path of love, for there was need for more and more men. The myth of the war-god had a double meaning: one, that as the Buddhist was inclined towards the homeless life, the population had begun to decrease; and, secondly, the increasing attacks and invasions and wars and battles were claiming more and more lives which had to be replaced. In the opinion of many, the general freedom bordering on licence and looseness which prevailed in respect of the relationship between sexes for a number of centuries should be explained in this manner. Even in modern times, there are parallels where nations in need of cannon-fodder have encouraged free love. That this is sanctified in the name of patriotism indicates merely that we live in an age where it is not necessary to sanctify things in the name of religion; or, that the religion of modern man is to be found in his political creeds.

Nothing, however, from among the above covers the total range of the erotic sculpted on the walls and especially the more shocking and disgusting type. Only one theory will fully explain this phenomenon and that is the philosophy of the Great Delight, of Bliss, which Buddhism aad Hinduism, Shaktism and Tantrism had all helped to evolve. It was the need of the times and as, often happens, the need was duly supplied. From the chaos of thought which then existed, a whole and wholesome, and a strangely serene and satisfying, philosophy emerged, a philosophy which at its best touches the very highest reach of the human mind and at its lowest reaches down to the other extreme. Let us see how this came about.

While the cult of the Goddess was evolving, another very important development took place in the field of faith. This was the

emergence of Tantr Shastr. The term *tantr* means to spread, enfold or extend knowledge. Taking up all the knowledge of earlier ages, this new faith offered a blend of the Vedic and the Brahmanic, the recent emergence of the Puranic deities and the worship of the old gods, as well as the pre-Vedic and tribal rites and cults like those connected with fertility and fecuntidy. Out of all this material was created something which at one time was the rage and vogue, and which has still not died out; nor is it ever likely to die out since it is based upon several fundamentals of human Nature and relies upon psychological truth. In its essence, it is mainly ritual and practice. Rites and exercises constitute the *sadhna* through which one may attain *siddhi* (success), and ultimately achieve the highest purpose—that of *moksh*, liberation from life and merging into the Diety. Where it overshoots the trend of the times is in accepting the Goddess as the Deity. In the developments of the period, the Woman had, after her return, attained divinity all over again and was seated alongside the God whose *Shakti*, energy, she had become. Nevertheless, the great gods—Brahma, Shiv and Vishnu—had not been dethroned nor were they thought of as lesser than their *Shaktis*. At best, the two, the god and his *shakti* were regarded as equals or were equated with each other; and the image of *Ardhnarishwar*—God as half-male and half-female—indicated this. It also indicated the perfect union of male and female, for in the highest concepts, the Substance, Brahm, was thought of as neutral; or as male in which case he was thought of as dormant and the Goddess, *Prakriti* or Nature, was Energy which made for manifestation and creation. In the Tantric creed, the deity was She, and worship of women was part of the ritual. Of the five elements, the *Panch-tattv*, essential for Tantric worship, *maithun*, the sexual act, was one; *mady*—wine, *mans*—meat, *matsy*—fish, and, *mudra*—parched grain, constituted the other four. And according to some interpretations, *mudra* is not parched grain but dance and gesticulation

which again requires woman as partner or otherwise. Obviously, such a philosophy could touch both extremes, and while at one end it stood for bliss and liberation, at the other it gained an unparalleled notoriety for its disgusting orgies and obscene practices.

One view is that these objectionable practices and rites were carried out not by all Tantrists but only by a particular sect known as the *Vamacharis*—the left-handed. This would mean that the others, known as the *Dakshinacharis,* did not indulge in such worship. This is not strictly true because the *Panch-tattv* are essential for the worship of the Devi, and without their use, the worship will remain incomplete, and *sidhi* is not possible. Of course, different interpretations of these five elements are offered so that the *Panch-tattv*, wine and fish and meat and parched grain and copulation, would differ from *sadhak* to *sadhak*. This is as exciting as it is intriguing, and some of the explanations are very intricate and philosophic, indeed. But, let us first understand how these items are, in any case, there. The Buddh emphasised renunciation which required, naturally, self-denial in the matter of eating and drinking as well as dance and love-making, and, from pity for the creatures, an attitude of non-violence. In reaction, it was necessary to give importance to these very things, the good things of life some of them. So eating—and eating meat, too—and drinking and dance and copulation—dining, wining and love-making which are the eternal verities for most people—were made part of the cult, so that there would be no qualm of conscience in respect of enjoying all these. In the case of the *Dakshnacharis*, the ritual could be kept within the limits of normal decency, by restricting wine to a certain quantity, and eating likewise within measure and bound, and cohabiting with the worshipper's own wife who would be, for the time being, the incarnation of the Goddess. In the case of other initiates, the *Vamacharis*, for instance, greater licence was the practice, and they have earned a bad name for their mid-night *chakrs* and orgiastic

ritual which involved a far freer concept of love-making, loose as loose can be, and having, in short, an as-you-will-and-with-whom-you-will approach. Let us observe, however that whether carried out by *Dakshinacharis* or *Vamacharis*, the ritual demanded that everything be consecrated to the Goddess, and unless that were done, the *Panch-tattav* would be impure, the acts unlawful and the worship unacceptable.

The philosophy underlying this ritual and the use of things and activities which are associated with *vasna*, desire of the senses, is increasingly gaining ground in the world. It postulates that passion may be exhausted by passion, and the craving for food and drink cured by indulgence in these. In the hierarchy of the Tantrists the *Dakshinachar* is merely the first rung, although it is regarded as superior to the Vedic, the Vaishnav and Shaiv worship, indicating thereby that worship of the Devi is the beginning of wisdom. The so-called *Vamacharis*, who are sometimes thought of as *Vama-acharis*, worshippers of *vama*, woman, is the next higher stage, and there are two—in the opinion of some, four—more stages until one attains perfection. These are *Siddantachar* and *Kaulachar* with *Aghorachar* and *Yogachar* being the two other intervening stages.

For the Tantrist, enjoyment and liberation become equally the fruit which the goddess bestows. And the two combine in the highest stage, that of the *Kaul* who possesses "merely the form of man and moves about the earth for the salvation of the world and the instruction of men!"[5] This way is known as "the path of return" in which even though the idea is to suppress passion and activity, this is done with reference to the formula that by the very things which bring about our downfall, will we rise high and attain *Siddhi*. This is not exactly the taming of the senses through indulgence, but rather canalisation because, all through, the object of the Tantrist is to attain spiritual perfection through arousing the latent energy, *Kundalini*, which lies coiled up in our being.

According to Tantric thought, the body is a miniature of the universe and just as the universe is pervaded by the Goddess, Shakti, so she pervades our being and when she awakens, we gain enlightenment and power.

Now let us cast a glance at the *Panch-tattv*. In the first place, it should be made clear that the Tantrist believes that human beings are not equal. He does not distinguish between them by creating an artificial caste system, but classifies them with reference to each person's temperament and capacity. This gives three classes of people, those of the Pashu *vritti* (Animal Nature) those of the Vir *vritti* (Heroic Nature) and those of the Divy *vritti* (Divine Nature). The practices vary for each, so that we have the Tamasachar for the *Pashu*, Rajasachar for the *Vir* and the Divyachar for the *Divy*.

It is with reference to these three divisions that we get different interpretations of the *Panch-tattv*, the five elements essential for Tantric worship. The literature available on this matter is truly vast, and the best that we can do is to quote a paragraph or two from an excellent summary made by Woodroffe : "The Mother of the Universe must be worshipped with these five elements, namely, wine, meat, fish, grain and woman, or their substitutes. By their use the universe itself is used as the article of worship. The Mahanirvana (Tantra) says that wine which gives joy and dispels the sorrows of men is Fire; flesh which nourishes and increases the strength of mind and body is Air; fish which increases generative power is Water; cereals grown on earth and which are the basis of life are Earth; and sexual union, which is the root of the world and the origin of all creation, is Ether. They thus signify the Power (Shakti) which produces all fiery elements, all terrestrial and aquatic life, all vegetable life, and the will, knowledge and action of the Supreme Prakriti productive of that great bliss which accompanies the process of creation......But the Panchatattva have not always their literal meaning. The meaning differs according as they

refer to the Tamasik (Pashuvachara), Rajasik (Virachara) or Sattvik (Divyachara) Sadhanas respectively. 'Wine' is only wine and Maithuna is only sexual union in the ritual of the Vira. To the Pashu, the Vira ritual (Virachara) is prohibited as unsuitable to this state, and the Divya, unless of the lower ritual kind, is beyond such things. The result is that the Panchatattva have each three meanings. Thus 'wine' may be wine (Vira ritual), or it may be cocoanut water (Pashu ritual) or it may mean the intoxicating knowledge of the Supreme attained by Yoga. The Panchatattva are thus threefold, namely, real where wine means wine, substitutional where wine means cocoanut water or some other liquid, and symbolical or divine where it is a symbol to denote the joy of Yoga, knowledge. The Divya Panchatattva for those of a truly Sattvika or spiritual temperament (Divyabhava) have been described as follows :

"Wine (Madya) according to Kaula Tantra is not any liquid, but that intoxicating knowledge acquired by Yoga of the Parabrahman which renders the worshipper senseless as regards the external world....

"Coition (Maithuna) is the union of the Shakti Kundalini, the 'Inner woman' and World-force in the lowest centre (Muladhara Chakra) of the Sadhaka's body with the Supreme Shiva in the highest centre (Sahasrara) in the upper Brain. This, the Yogini Tantra says, is the best of all unions for those who are Yati, that is, who have controlled their passions.

"Esoteric meaning of coition or Maithuna is thus stated in the Agama. The ruddy hued Ra is in the Kunda. The letter Ma is in the Mahayoni (not the female genitals but the lightninglike triangle or Yoni in the Sahasrara or upper brain) in the form of Bindu (a 'condensed' form of Shakti). When Ma seated on the Hamsa (the 'bird' which is the pair Shiva-Shakti as Jiva) in the form of A unites with Ra then Brahman knowledge, which is the source of supreme bliss, is

gained by the Sadhaka who is then called Atmarama (Enjoyer with the Self), for his enjoyment is in the Atma in the Sahasrara. (For this reason too the word Rama, which also means sexual enjoyment, is equivalent to the liberator-Brahman, Ra+a+ma). The union of Shiva and Shakti is described as true Yoga from which... arises that Joy which is known as the Supreme Bliss.

"This is the union on the purely Sattvik plane which corresponds in the Rajasik plane to the union of Shiva and Shakti in the persons of their worshippers. It will have been observed that here in this Divya or Sattvik Sadhana 'Wine', 'Woman', and so forth are really names for Yogik operations."[6]

Let us add here that this classification of the three is played upon in Indian thought in other ways also. We have the three paths—of *Gyan*—knowledge, of *Yog*—union, but normally understood as austerity, and of *Bhakti*—devotional worship of the deity. Again we are told that the Goddess may be and is meditated upon in three forms, as Body, as Mind, and as the Heart, the ocean of mercy and love; or again, as the Devi Tripura, which is the real form, and Lalita which is the manifest one, and the substance, Pure Spirit, the *Purush*—Brahma, Vishnu or Shiv—as her inert form. While looking at the intriguing sculptures involving one male and three females or one female and three males, all this will be of some help. Of course, a much simpler interpretation is that She, as the Devi, is spouse of all the three Gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiv; and, correspondingly, He, as *the* God, is the husband of the three chief goddesses, Saraswati, Lakshmi and Parvati. Or, may be, the Tantric Creed was in dalliance with the other three cults, Brahmanism, Vaishnavism and Shaivism, which were neither out of power nor in any way regarded inferior by the general people including women. Indeed, the cult of the goddess arose because the God Shiv was so distracted by the death of his wife Sati—who was born, later, as Parvati—that he

picked up her corpse and went about carrying it everywhere. To put a stop to his mad preoccupation, Vishnu followed him all over and cut the dead body into pieces. At fifty-one places all over India did the pieces fall and there, at those places, *piths* were set up and the Goddess began to be worshipped. The *yoni*—the generative organ—fell at Kamakhya where the Goddess is worshipped in that form. Kamakhya means, She who is called Kam, so that the Devi is equated in this way with Desire which she creates and she fulfils and so she is both the enjoyer and the enjoyed. Along with the age-old worship of the Lingam, that of *yoni* had begun.

Incidentally, this myth of the scattering of the pieces all over the sub-continent alludes to and explains the wide-spread, all-India character of the Tantric creed. Another myth tells that *Tantr shastr* originated from Shiv who explains also that this is the right scripture and practice for the men and women of the present age. The Buddh had chosen to *think;* thought must be replaced by faith, and by an easy and natural way of spiritual attainment. This the Tantric creed undertook to provide to the people. In the Mahanirvan Tantr, Parvati says to Shiv "Now the sinful Kali Age is upon us, when Dharma is destroyed, an Age full of evil customs and deceit. Men pursue evil ways. The Vedas have lost their power, Smritis are forgotten, and many of the Puranas, which show the many ways (to Liberation) will, O Lord ! be destroyed. Men will become averse from religious rites, without restraint, maddened with pride, ever given over to sinful acts, lustful, gluttonous, cruel, heartless, harsh of speech, deceitful, short-lived, poverty-stricken, harrassed by sickness and sorrow, ugly, feeble, low, stupid, mean and addicted to mean habits, companions of the base, thievish, calumnious, malicious, quarrelsome, depraved, cowards, and ever-ailing, devoid of all sense of shame and sin, shameless, seducers of other's wives......How can men with the taint of this age, upon them, without great pains, obtain longevity, health and energy, increase of strength and courage,

learning, intelligence and happiness; and how they may become great in strength and valour, pure of heart, obedient to parents, devoted to their wives, mindful of the good of their neighbours, reverent to the Devas and their Gurus, cherishers of their children and kinsmen, possessing the knowledge of the Brahman, learned in the lure of, and ever meditating on, the Brahman......"

In reply Shiv says that those living in this age of sin cannot gain purity through Vedic ritual nor achieve their ends by the Samhitas and Smritis and asserts : "Verily, verily and yet again verily, I say unto you, O beloved, that in this Age there is no way to Liberation but that proclaimed by the Agama....... In this age the Mantras of the Tantras are efficacious, yield immediate fruit, and are auspicious for Japa, Yagna, and all such practices and ceremonies. The Vedic rites and Mantras which were efficacious in the First Age have ceased to be so in this...... To worship with the aid of other Mantras is as fruitless as it is to cohabit with a barren woman. No other path is there to salvation and happiness in this life or in that to come like unto that shown by the *Tantras* which give both happiness and Liberation."[7]

Most people think that the *tantrs* are just 'charm and magic'. That, to a large extent, they are. But they brought back the woman, fuel for man's desire, with a bang into the world : they made her teacher and deity. And they sanctified the sexual act as ritual and gave it an exalted significance. The Buddhist Tantrist had to think harder, in the sense that the entire teaching of the Buddh was made to turn and turn about exactly in the opposite direction; from *nirvan* to *sansar*, from negative to acceptance, from non-being and nothingness to merging in the All and the Everlasting, in *Pragya*, Wisdom, and partaking in the nature of that which was Bliss—the opposite of Sorrow which had, for him, constituted life's essence. In Hinduism, the concept of the goddess as Tripursundri, as Lalita and Kameshwari,

had helped evolve the idea of Bliss as Kam—from which the world emerges, in which it lives, towards which it moves and into which it merges. Buddhism had moved along parallel lines. Woman became the way to the ultimate state of perfection, to Sukhvati, the lofty abode of the Wise Ones; and the sexual act was converted into an instrument of bliss which was also release. It was stated that the Buddh himself "had set the example; it was by practising *maithuna* that he had succeeded in conquering Mara, and the same technique had made him omniscient and the master of magical powers. Practices 'in the Chinese fashion' are recommended in the Buddhist *tantras*. *Mahacina-krama-caras*, tells how the sage Vasistha, son of Brahma, goes to find Vishnu, under the aspect of the Buddh, to ask him about the rites of the goddess Tara. He enters the great country of China and sees the Buddh surrounded by a thousand mistresses in erotic ecstasy. The sage's surprise verges on indignation. 'These are practices contrary to the Vedas !' he cries. A voice from space corrects him : 'if', says the voice, 'thou wouldst gain my favour, it is with these practices in the Chinese fashion that thou must worship me !' He approaches the Buddh and receives from his lips this unexpected lesson : (Women are the gods, women are life, women are adornment. Be ever among women in thought."[8]

Thus in a great intellectual effort and spiritual compromise, the other world and this were made one. The wall created by the Buddh and many another was hewn down. The cosmos was retrieved from its seeming duality and restored to its essential unity. Life and Liberation ceased to be separate entities, and Body and Spirit became one, for each was other. The new concept is summed up, philosophically, in a single formula : "The eternal rhythm of Divine Breath is outwards from spirit to matter inwards from matter to spirit. Devi as Maya evolves the world. As Mahamaya she recalls it to herself......Each of these movements

is divine. Enjoyment and liberation are each her gifts." Or, to put it differently, Kam, in its fullest sense, was both the Goal and the path, was Being as well as becoming, was the Life Eternal as well as our earthly living. And *maithun,* sexual-act, symbolised this unity; the embrace was the eternal united to the transient, was substance and its manifestation—and in this union there was joy, *anand* and *mahasukh.* It is this high philosophy which we find portrayed on the temple-surfaces. And viewed from that angle, the erotic sculptures, especially the more indecent postures assume a different and deeper meaning, and, may be, the crudest and the vulgarest are, in their religious content, the highest and the noblest. Just as consummation, in the case of Parvati, was culmination of a long and terrifically hard penance, so is *siddhi* symbolised by the sexual act, for the Tantric *sadhak.* The erotic sculpture symbolises *sadhna,* and the more complicated the sculpture, the more difficult the *sadhna* it represents, and, just round the corner, there is She, or He, who is Bliss, or She-and-He who is *Mahanirvan* and *Mahasukh* in one.

But whether we regard them as vile or virtuous, let us not quarrel with the statues. Whether we understand or do not understand the end and purpose of the erotic element in Indian sculpture, condemning and criticising or disfiguring and demolishing it will hardly help. Let us, therefore, admire them and admire the skill and craftsmanship, the good sense and high courage, of those who made these sculptures. After all one good thing about the statues, even about the naked statues and those which are making love, is that they do not mind being looked at and even studied. And while they are there—which may not be for long, for they are but stone, which is old and crumbling—let us make use of them in trying to figure out if any special meaning or philosophy of joy and wisdom really attaches to them. At any rate, the *murti,* whether erotic or otherwise, is only a symbol.

Those who broke the images did wisely for they proved that the idol was but stone or wood or marble or gold or bronze or silver or whatever it was sculpted from; and did foolishly because they forgot that breaking the idol was not equal to killing the god which it stood for. Let us, therefore, beware that in treating Desire, whatever the form it takes, whether of the alluring and inviting female for the man, or the attractive and handsome male for the woman, whether of Love that sacrifices or Passion that demands, we do not err. May be, Desire is a Rose of Delight so that even if we crush it and scatter its petals in the air, nay, even burn it, its fragrance will still remain, remain, as in the case of the god that was burnt by Shiv, in the ashes. If, on the other hand, it is a dread God, let us dread it, and dread its allies and friends be they Male or Female or Wine or Spring, and not be misled into believing that by shutting our eyes to reality we shall succeed in overcoming it. In respect of this and other laws of nature and of human nature, let us be in no hurry to hold on to this thesis or that. If, without proper checking up, one thesis is emphasised out of proportion it brings about, in reaction, an anti-thesis which prevails. The latter, in its own turn, produces another reaction, and so on. Not until the perfect synthesis is achieved—the kind which the erotic sculpture of India hints at—will the individual or society ever get out of the vicious circle. The message writ large in the form of erotic sculpture is, therefore, this : not in starvation of Desire, nor in inordinate indulgence; not in taking things to extremes but understanding their true nature and acting according to the golden mean and the perfect norm; in that we shall find wisdom, strength, joy and salvation.

Notes & References

CHAPTER I

Page No.	*Note No.*	
1	1	Laurence Hope. The Garden of Kam and other Love Lyrics from India, P. 5.
2	2	*ibid*
7	3	India's philosophy at its highest; cf. quotation on page 61
8	4	This juxtaposition of the contraries in human nature is a favourite theme in religion, philosophy and literature. Cf. in English poetry, Shakespeare in 'Hamlet' Pope in 'Essay on Man' and Swinburne in 'Choruses' from Atlanta in Calydon.'
8	5	Indirectly, the same concept—that life is equal to sorrow—as proclaimed by the Buddha.

CHAPTER II

Page No.	*Note No.*	
11	1	*Rigved*, X : 129
11	2	*The Atharv Ved*, III : 21
12	3	*The Atharv Ved*, IX : 2
12	4	In all earlier religious literature the 'person' is referred to as 'He'; the evolution of the Cult of Goddess

		changes this, into 'She'.
12	5	This word, as many other words in scriptures, are best studied with reference to the original. Usually, they are created out of two or more concepts given in the text. Here, for example, of the two portions of the word, *ar* relates to *archan* (praise) and *ka* stands for pleasure.
13	6	*Brihad-Aranyak Upanishad*, First Adhyay, Second Brahman.
13	7	Here the person is 'He', male.
13	8	The word for person '*purush*' is combination of '*purv*' meaning before or earlier, and *ush* meaning to burn (evils).
14	9	The verb in the original text is *pat;* hence *pati* (husband), and *patni* (wife).
14	10	The most prominent of the Upanishadic philosophers.
14	11	*Brihad-Aranyak Upanishad*, First Adhyay, Fourth Brahman.
14	12	This is rather subtle. *Atman* is being translated as body; in the context of this study this equation of the body with the self by the Upanishadic seers constitutes one of the main planks.
14	13	*Brihad—Aranyak—Upanishad*, First Adhyay, Fourth Brahman.
17	14	Schopenhauer, *Essay on Women.*
19	15	From the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam.
22	16	Kumarsambhav, VI : 95
22	17	Kumarsambhav, IV : 41
23	18	This might create the impression that Bhim was a voluptuary, which is incorrect. The Pandavs were generally restrained and Arjun has very many more love-adventures associated with him than Bhim.

CHAPTER III

Page No.	Note No.	
28	1	F.L. Woodward, *Some Sayings of the*
28	2	*Buddha.*
29	3	Ananda Coomaraswamy : *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, P. 27
29	4	The 'house' is Life and the 'builder' is Desire.
30	5	Quoted by Ananda Coomaraswamy, op. cit. P. 30
31	5	The Buddha, the First Sermon.
32	6	Ananda Coomaraswamy, op. cit. P. 156
32	7	*ibid*, P. 154
32	8	*ibid*, Pp. 154-55
33	9	The Buddha's prophecy in the context of the admission of women to the fold proved true.

CHAPTER IV

Page No.	Note No.	
38	1	Gordon Craig. *The Art of the Theatre*, Quoted by Ananda Coomaraswamy, op. cit. P. 172
38	2	The Buddha, The Second Sermon.
39	3	The Buddha, The Third Sermon.
40	4	Ananda Coomaraswamy, op. cit. Pp. 14-15.
41	5	*ibid*, Pp. 16. 17.
41	6	*Vishuddhi Marg*, Chapter I
42	7	Ananda Coomaraswamy, op. cit. P. 156.
43	8	Manu and many more hold to this view of Woman
	9	seeking her God in Man.
	10	No. 10 and No. 8 constitute question and answer.

CHAPTER V

Page No.	Note No.	
56	1	*Kam Kala Vilas*, edited by John Woodroffe.
58	2	*ibid.*
59	3	For a more elaborate study of this theme, see this author's 'Immortal Khajuraho', Chapter X.

CHAPTER VI

Page No.	Note No.	
65	1	*From Hymns to the Goddess*, by Arthur & Ellen Avalon.
66	2	
66	3	
66	4	
72	5	*Maha Nirvan Tantr* X : 108
75	6	John Woodroffe, *Shakti and Shakta*, see Pp. 565-569.
77	7	*Maha Nirvan Tantr*, edited by Arthur Avalon, see Chapters I, II.
78	8	Quoted by Mircea Eliade in his *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, Pp. 263-264.

Notes on Plates

General Note

The plates have been arranged to tell pictorially the story set out in the text. Although the chronological order has not been maintained throughout, in the earlier part an attempt has been made to indicate how after having been banished, so to speak, from the world of Man, Woman reappears, at first tentatively, than asserts herself, becomes the female, and, finally, emerges as the goddess. Coming, to begin with, as a worshipper, or as someone belonging to the world of Nature, or as a denizen of the heavens, or, again, merely as a character in the *Jatak* tales built around the earlier lives of the Buddha which at several places like Bharhut, Sanchi, Nagarjunkonda or Ajanta, provide the excuse for depicting all kinds of scenes including those of pleasure and dalliance, she establishes her right to return. Shy and demure and modest at first, she becomes bolder as she becomes more and more sure that her return is welcome. Then two developments take place. She appears with her sex revealed, and she appears with the male as companion. In both these cases, there is still the semblance of "virtue" and, as yet, there is no wantonness. There is, for example, a world of difference between the Sanchi piece reproduced here, and the later nudes of, shall we say, Konark and Khajuraho where sex is flaunted with a full consciousness of its relation to desire and desirableness. In the case of appearance as couple, the first couples are almost grotesque and miles apart from the concept we have of the *mithun*, the erotic couple. Witness the donor couple at Karle Caves which indicates only the normal

desire of the donors to perpetuate their own memory. Or, else, the decoration may consist of flying *ghandharvs* and other celestial beings, who appear to be 'harmless' enough, but even if they were indiscreet they would be regarded as above criticism and censure, and would not be bound by human standards of judgement.

Nevertheless, all this helps to establish and ensure the place of the female and the place of the couple in the scheme of decoration. Soon, more and more females appear and of the alluring type, for the *Jatak* stories and the life of pleasure which Gautam led before he renounced the world, provided reason and motif for realistic reproduction of the Woman Beautiful and of scenes of dalliance. Within a few hundred years of the reappearance of Woman, rapid development takes place in the field of erotic representation. Furthermore, at places like Mathura etc., we find evidence of the influence of Greek culture entering via Gandhar and Kushan art. Bacchanalian scenes introduce wine and woman and pleasure; and there are several exquisite studies of handsome and healthily inviting females. Now the erotic activity manifests itself openly, and the couple, and the couple-in-embrace, and then the love-play in its various phases and poses—all these may be seen. Then from the 'natural', there is the change-over to the 'unnatural' and the orgiastic. By this time the Tantric reaction to Buddhist teaching is in full swing, and all over India, temple after temple carries the sculptural representation of the tenets of the new cult.

The essentials of the story completed, specimens follow from various sites to illustrate the pan-Indian character of the new philosophy. Since there is overlapping as well as a certain amount of uncertainty in respect of dates, at this stage strict adherence to the chronological order has not been attempted.

To preclude the need for elaborate notes on individual plates, some general remarks may be made here about a few important aspects of the illustrations. Many plates present the female figure

in all its charm and allurement. Since the theme is return of Woman and rehabilitation of Sex, female beauty is portrayed with a flair and gusto which are unparalleled in the world of art.

Examples in the selection here are from Orissa and Belur, Bhubaneswar, Konark, Ranakpur and above all, from Khajuraho. At this last named site, the artists set out once again to furnish a veritable gallery of female beauty as *nayikas* and *apsaras*, mortal and celestial damsels. The *nayikas*, earthly beauties, are shown as engaged in a variety of secular occupations like braiding the hair, applying *tilak* to the forehead, collyrium to the eyes, or lac-dye to the feet; or extracting a thorn, or looking into a mirror, or holding a pet-bird or writing a letter, and so forth. The *apsaras* display their loveliness and vaunt their charms without the ruses their mortal counterparts adopt. Together, they provide some of the most voluptuous, provocative and bewitching beauties of Indian sculpture.

A second point to note in respect of the plates is the 'unnatural', 'pervert' and orgiastic character of many of the sculptures, and the puzzling nature and astonishing variety of some of the poses. At places like Bhubaneswar, Konark, Khajuraho, Belgavi, Gandikota, Koilkontal, Modhera, Rampur and Ranakpur, we come across many examples of this kind. Briefly, it may be stated that there is the philosophic and spiritual content to the orgiastic representation, and a deep and esoteric meaning is construable. It is also debatable whether they illustrate the text of the Kam-Sutr or, merely the phase of degeneration when the Cult, having run through its purity and spirituality got floundered in the delta of excess and morbid indulgence like any sick civilization, any rotting culture, will do. From the spiritual point of view, all these poses represent the various stages of *sadhana*—of striving towards the spiritual goal of Release and of merging into the Infinite.

As to the deviations and perversions, there are plenty of these in Indian sculpture. Of cunnilingus and fellatio—sucking of the male, and licking of the female, organ, respectively—there is no end. Opinion is divided whether these should be regarded as deviations or perversions or merely two more ways of tasting the pleasures of the Garden of Desire. In its essence, these and most others are part of the total tale of contact or confrontation of desire with desire. The current runs throughout the body and at all points, though it is more concentrated in the so called erogenic zones. The point is that all these contacts help ultimately to heighten the sexual feeling and enjoyment since these various regions stimulate the central sexual reflex and serve as channels for the flow of the same nervous energy. For those who consider such activities as pervert or as unaesthetic, Havlock Ellis's opinion should form an interesting comment. "These phenomena are essentially normal. Many of them are commonly spoken of as 'perversions.' In so far, however, as they are aids to tumescence, they must be regarded as coming within the range of normal variation. They may be considered unaesthetic, but that is another matter. It has, moreover, to be remembered that aesthetic values are changed under the influence of sexual emotion; from the lover's point of view, many things are beautiful which are unbeautiful from the point of view of him who is not a lover, and, the greater the degree to which the lover is swayed by his passion, the greater the extent to which his normal aesthetic standard is liable to be modified. From the non-sexual standpoint, indeed, the whole process of sex may be considered unaesthetic, except the earlier stages of tumescence."

Another point which may be considered here is that of group-formations in the sexual acts. There are several pictures in which the act is carried on with, or with the help of, several persons. Put at its mildest, it may be a matter of attendants; no more. On the other hand, it may all be group-orgies in the real sense of the

word—the man with several women or the woman with several men. Those who could afford keeping harems would certainly indulge in this. This can apply to men as well as women; for courtesans and queens keeping male-harems, might pursue such pleasures. As is well known 'orgies' form a part of the Tantric Cult, and there is a meticulously prescribed ritual for these.

Thirdly, there is the matter of the 'animals'. This has two aspects. First there are men and women who have animal faces. This is a representation of the *Shastric* categorisation of men and women as the *rabbit*, *bull* and *horse* types among men, and as *doe*, *mare* and *she-elephant* among women. This classification is made according to the size of the sexual organs—length of the male member and the depth of the vagina. In accordance with this categorisation, several combinations and permutations of coupling are possible, yielding the *right*, the *tight*, the *loose*, the *tighter*, and the *looser* fits. Several sculptures provide examples of *wrong* coupling.

Then, there is bestiality. This element of mixo-scopia Zoophilia as well as Zooerastia is met with at several places in India. The sight of animals copulating and copulation of human beings with animals—active as well as passive—are in abundant evidence. Several interesting explanations of this are possible and at least four may be noted here. This may indicate nothing more than weak-mindedness and degenerate morals, or desperate remedies for terrible repression and uncontrollable desire which a celebate in the forest, or a lonely woman shut up in the house or a monk in a cave may indulge. Since nature must have her way, the unnatural repression of one's natural desires often results in unnatural acts for satisfying that desire. This may take all kinds of forms which are regarded in the sexual sphere as unnatural and pervert. Sodomy, lesbianism and bestiality might all be explained in this way. In this connection, Krafft Ebing says : "Violation of animals, monstrous and revolting as it seems to mankind, is by no means always due to

psychopathological conditions. Low morality and great sexual desire, with lack of opportunity for natural indulgence, are the principal motives of this unnatural means of sexual satisfaction, which is resorted to by women as well as by men .... Experience teaches that bestiality with cows and horses is none too infrequent. Occasionally the acts may be undertaken with goats, bitches, and even with hens......The intercourse of females with beasts is limited to dogs. A monstrous example of the moral depravity in large cities is related by Maschka; it is the case of a Parisian female who showed herself in the sexual act with a trained bulldog, to a secret circle of *roues*, at ten francs a head."

Secondly in a society where the art of love-making had been developed into such a fine art, all these may be cultivated tastes. The idea would be to experience all variations of the theme, to exploit all possibilities and to understand the nature of the sexual experience in its total sweep and range. Superior to the above two explanations and getting on to the religious and philosophic plane, is the view that all desire is holy, and animals are but beings—indeed, in Hindu mythology gods have often appeared in the form of animals—so that the holiness of desire would, like *amrit*, sanctify any vehicle; and if the mind is pure, all else, whether woman or man or animal, is but means. Finally, there is the approach of the Yogi, specially the *aghor* type, who would be concerned with conquering all feelings of revulsion. It would be part of the Yogic technique and exercise and *sadhana* to learn to eat anything and everything, to drink whatever is offered, and, in the same way, to indulge in desire irrespective of the mate, divine, human or bestial.

Mention may also be made here of the seemingly unnatural size of the male-organ as seen in several plates. This extraordinary size of the *lingam* is explained in two ways : artistic exaggeration, symbolishing that the man is at the moment *all* desire ; realistic

portrayal of any limb of the body where desire and use are concentrated. (The glutton will have a very big belly, and a boxer, or anyone who has to use these muscles, may have very hefty biceps). The *Kam-Shastrs* of the Hindus—the learned treatises on Love—give many formulas and compounds whereby the member may be enlarged to proportions of the member of a horse or a donkey. Finally, it will be observed that the total erotic sculptural representation is built around that phase of sexual act which is known as tumescence. It must be remembered that according to the highest principles of *sadhana*, detumescence is out of the question. The expression of joy in the doing which we see on the faces of sculpted lovers may be partly due to this, because even common experience has it that during this phase, the fire of desire imparts a radiant glow of enjoyment. But in relation to the Cult, the point of complete control in respect of release of semen cannot be over-emphasized. If the discharge occurs, the entire *sadhana* will go waste; nay this may constitute a kind of sin expiation whereof would not be easy. And, it is not, let it be noted, a question of *coitus reservatus* ; nor should this be thought of, as the worst critics of the cult are likely to think, as a matter of normal precaution against possible pregnancy in promiscuous sexual indulgence. And since, in a way, the moment of intense desire is converted into an eternity of longing, the joy and bliss which usually mark the faces of the lovers are understandable even common-sensically. Of course, from the point of view of the philosophic and religious concepts of the Cult, the joy and ecstasy are part of the reward of fulfilment, and attainment of the goal.

A word about the term *mithun* which will occur several times in the notes on individual plates. *Mithun* means couple, and, in the most ordinary sense, a man and woman standing together by the side of each other would be regarded as a *mithun*. In its special sense, however, the term indicates the pair and the act of

pairing, so that the paraphrase would be that ungainly phrase, the amorous couple. In Sanskrit, the root word for copulation is *maithun*, and *mithun* proper would mean 'the state of being a couple' in relation to the act of copulation. Since most of the plates represent *mithuns*, the single word *mithun* is used to denote the subject matter.

Notes on individual plates follow. These indicate briefly the place and the period of each illustration and what it depicts.

1. Sudarshana Yakshi, Bharhut; 2nd century B.C. A Yakshi is a kind of demi-goddess belonging to the paradise of the god of wealth, *Kuber*.
2. Salbhanjika, or Vrikshaka—nymph standing under *Sal* tree laden with flowers—Sanchi, the Great Stup, Eastern Gate; 2nd century B.C. Compare with the Bharhut specimen and note the greater grace, loveliness and erotic appeal of this figure.
3. Yakshis, railing pillars from Bhuteshvar, Mathura Museum; 2nd century A.D. The figure on the left holding the wine-pot in one hand and in the other the bunch of mangoes—symbol of Spring, friend of Kam, and, therefore, of Desire—as also the couple above, indicate that pleasure and love are already out in the open.
4. A donor couple, Karle caves; 1st century B.C. Although not amorous here, the figures fore-shadow in their physical build the mighty vehicles of passion of the sculptures at Konark.
5. Dancing Couple, Karle caves; 1st century B.C. Mark the swaying grace and plasticity of the figures.
6. Indr's visit to the Buddh, Nagarjunkonda; 2nd century B.C. The god whose heaven is a byword for beauty and pleasure is accompanied naturally by musicians and dancers; understandably enough, the erotic element is fairly subdued.

7. The Buddh and Nand visit Heaven, Nagarjunkonda; 2nd century A.D. Apsaras of Heaven displaying their charms and graces.

8 &9. *Mithuns*, Nagarjunkonda; 2nd century B.C. The *mithun* panels at Nagarjunkonda make a rich treasure of the art of love. Here are two studies in wooing : reluctance and acceptance.

10. A Dancing Couple, Nagarjunkonda; 2nd century B.C.

11. Nag King and Queen with attendant, Ajanta; 5th-6th century A.D. The sculpture is regarded as one of the master-pieces at Ajanta.

12. *Mithun* with attendants, Ajanta; 5th-6th century A.D. The Jatak stories and the life of the Buddh provided the excuse to represent scenes of love and pleasure and alluring female figures.

13. Temptation Panel, Ajanta; 5th-6th Century A.D. Daughters of Mar dancing in a final attempt to lure Siddarth away from attaining enlightenment.

14. Flying *Ghandarvs* Ceiling, Badami caves; 6th century A.D.

15. Pillar decoration, Badami caves; 6th century A.D. The fish is the emblem on the banner of Kam, God of Love, and is generally regarded as an aphrodisiac.

16. The Courtesan and the Lover, Mathura; 2nd Century A.D. Usually referred to as the Bacchanalian scene, this group of figures shows a courtesan in a state of intoxication. She is being supported by her lover and the cup-bearer; on extreme right, stands the bawd, the go-between, disgusted and disgusting.

17. *Mithun* and Attendants, Badami caves; 6th century A.D. The attendant's attempt at not seeing what is on is a familiar motif in erotic sculpture.

18. *Mithuu*, Aihole, Durga Temple, Doorjamb; 6th century A.D.

Mark the grace and loveliness of the figures.

19. *Mithun,* Aihole, Durga Temple. The experiments in love-making and variations on the theme of poses begin. Since Desire permeates the entire body, contact at any and every point is pleasure-yielding.
20. *Mithun,* Aihole, Hucchimalligudi Temple; 6th century A.D.
21. *Mithun,* Aihole, Ladkhan temple; 6th century A.D.
22. *Mithun,* flying couple, Deogarh ; 6th century A.D.
23. *Mithun,* the flying couple, Pattadakal, Malikarjuna temple; 8th century A.D.
24. *Mithun,* Kailash Temple, Ellora; 8th century A.D.
25. *Mithun,* Kailash Temple, Ellora; 8th century. Note the reaching out in desire by the woman. The sculpture should be compared with many like pieces at Konark and elsewhere indicating the split second before the kiss; the noses have met and the lips would soon be joined.
26. *Mithun,* Teli-ka-Mandir, Gwalior Fort; 10th century A.D.
27. *Mithun,* Figures on a pillar in the Kalyan Mandap, Vellore; 14th century A.D.
28. Madanika, bracket female figure, Chinnakeshwar temple Belur; 12th century A.D. Is she pausing a while after a round of dance or is some monkey mischief on ?
29. Madanika, bracket female figure, Chinnakeshwar temple, Belur; 12th century A.D. Another and a celebrated one of the *Madanikas* on the pillar brackets at this place. The excuse for loosening the skirt is the scorpion—now thrown out and seen lying at the bottom—which had got into the folds of the dress.
30. After the Bath ; beautiful female figure, Osia; 9th century. The feminine figure in this and several still better known examples from Osia is alluringly and sensitively chiselled.

31. *Mithun*—What else ? Koilkuntole, Distt. Cuddapa, Andhra Pradesh. This and the next two sculptures are from the entrance to the compound of the small way-side temple; late medieval, by which time the 'unnatural' and the orgiastic phase of the Cult was the rage all over.

32. *Mithun*, Koilkuntole, Distt. Cuddapa, Andhra Pradesh, late medieval.

33. *Mithun*, Koilkuntole, Distt. Cuddapa, Andhra Pradesh; late medieval. Mark the convulsions of hot desire.

34. *Mithun*, Raghunath temple, Srirangam; 14th century. This temple is not particularly known for its erotic representations. A few specimens which exist indicate merely that it had become customary for almost every temple to carry a few erotic figures.

35. *Mithun*, Limboji Mata Temple, Delmel, Distt. Mehsana, Gujarat; late medieval, an orgy. Note the horse-face man in the couple on the left.

36. *Mithun*, Limboji Mata Temple, Delmel, Distt. Mehsana, Gujarat; late medieval. Passion-rocked figure in the foreground, swaying dancers at the back. The stone is wearing out.

37. *Mithun*, Ranganayakulu temple, Gandikota, Distt. Cuddapa, Andhra Pradesh. This peculiar stance with the woman standing on her head and the feet of the male resting on the feet of the female constituting thus a gymnastic feat rather than a sexual pose is one of the many such sculptures which may be seen all over India. These poses help to furnish what is verily a sexual circus show, and give rise to the theory that these are Yogic *asans*.

38. Erotic figures, Veerabhadraswami Temple, Mecherala, Distt. Guntur, Andhra Pradesh; late medieval. The scene tells the tale, may be, of unlawful union so that the right

woman has come to claim her man and the right man—the bearded one—her woman.

39. Erotic figures, Veerabhadraswami Temple, Mecherala, Distt. Guntur, Andhra Pradesh; late medieval. Again a tale, where something is wrong, whether rape, adultry or fornication, which the knight errant with the sword is out to prevent and/or avenge.

40. Erotic figures, Veerabhadraswami Temple, Mecherala, Distt. Guntur, Andhra Pradesh; late medieval. A tale, again, may be, where the man on the right is telling his mate: 'Let us follow the example on the left.'

41 to 46. Erotic friezes, depicting orgies. Tirupakesa Temple, Belgavi, Distt. Shimoga, Mysore State ; late medieval. These plates from Belgavi furnish extremely interesting evidence of the orgiastic nature of the erotic activity relating to the Cult. This group of illustrations presents almost the entire gamut of the sexual activity, specially of the unnatural sort.

47. *Mithun*, Sun Temple, Modhera; 12th-13th century A.D.

48. Erotic figures, Sun Temple, Modhera; 12th-13th century A.D. Fellatio and Cunnilingus.

49. Erotic figures, Sun Temple, Modhera; 12th-13th century A.D. Compare with No. 48 which is another representation of the same figures, indulging in the same pleasures: Fellatio and Cunnilingus.

50. Erotic figures, Sun Temple, Modhera. Orgiastic; anal intromission in the foreground; in the background two women and a man between them.

51. Erotic figures, Sun Temple, Modhera. Orgy.

52. Erotic Carvings from a Pillar, Shiv Temple, Ramgarh, Rajasthan; 13th century A.D. One of the many intricate sexual poses which had begun to be carved during this phase of the Cult.

53. Erotic figures from the plinth, Shiv Temple, Ramgarh, Rajasthan; 13th century A.D. Orgiastic activity.

54. Erotic figures on the pillar capital, Shiv Temple, Ramgarh, Rajasthan; 13th century. Cunnilingus and Fellatio.

55. Erotic figures from the plinth, Shiv Temple, Ramgarh, Rajasthan; 13th century, A.D. Bestiality.

56. Erotic figure from the pillar, Shiv Temple, Ramgarh, Rajasthan; 13th century, A.D. Sexo-Yogic *asan* and an artificial device for insertion.

57. Erotic figures from the plinth, Shiv Temple, Ramgarh, Rajasthan; 13th century, A.D.

58. *Mithun*, Parsurameswar Temple, Bhubaneswar, Orissa; 7th century. Note the remarkable grace and proportion of the figures and the element of restraint and purity in the passion. The development along the road of desire is from this kind of *Mithun* to the erotic activity of the type seen in the Belgavi and Ramgarh plates just preceding this, and in some of the illustrations from Bhubaneswar and Konark which will follow.

59. A Panel from Bhog Mandap, Lingaraj Temple, Bhubaneswar; 11th century. As in respect of the temple architecture, so with the decorative element and the philosophic content of the sculptures, the Lingaraj marks the zenith. In the Bhog Mandap, the Hall of Enjoyment, these sculptures are quite appropriately placed. Various aspects of the erotic activity are shown here and the couples radiate bliss and joy. The three couples in the central row under brackets indicate the classification of men and women according to the physical build.

60. Erotic couple, Lingaraj Temple, Bhubaneswar; 11th century A.D. Mark the bliss of the union.

61. Detail of 59, Lingaraj Temple, Bhubaneswar; 11th century.

The central figure with the man very much bigger than the woman whom he has lifted up to his waist shows the 'misfit' in copulation—horse-man and the doe-woman. In accordance with the *Shastric* divisions such a union would be regarded as tighter-fit, and not very appropriate.

62. Erotic figures, Lingaraj Temple, Bhubaneswar; 11th century A.D. See general note regarding the size of the *lingam*.
63. Erotic figures, Lingaraj Temple, Bhubaneswar; 11th century.
64. Erotic figures, Lingaraj Temple, Bhubaneswar; 11th century. Ecstasy.
65. Erotic figures, Lingaraj Temple, Bhubaneswar; 11th century. Fellatio.
66. Erotic figures, Lingaraj Temple, Bhubaneswar; 11th century. Bestiality.
67. Erotic figures, Raja Rani Temple, Bhubaneswar; 11th century. Cunnilingus. The standing female figure is one of the loveliest in Indian sculpture—a veritable incarnation of beauty, light and grace.
68. Erotic figures, Raja Rani Temple, Bhubaneswar; 11th century A.D. Another of the beautiful *nayikas* in amorous dalliance. This temple is celebrated for its exceptionally well chiselled figures of young damsels carved in various amorous acts and moods.
69. *Mithun*, Raja Rani Temple, Bhubaneswar; 11th century.
70. *Mithun*, Sun Temple, Konark; 13th century A.D. Erotic sculptures of Konark are world famous, and deservedly so, for their remarkable grace and elegance.
71. *Mithun*, Sun Temple, Konark; 13th century. More than anything else, the expression of bliss and serenity on the faces of the lovers is a special feature of the Konark sculptures. Note the imp of a man on the extreme right.
72. Erotic figures, Sun Temple, Konark; 13th century A.D.

Kiss above, fellatio below.

73. Erotic figure, Sun Temple, Konark; 13th century. Female and an artificial device, a *lingam*. Note how the stone has worn out because of the effect of the sea by which the temple stands.

74. Erotic figures in wheel-spokes, Sun Temple, Konark; 13th century. The gaint wheels are marvels of sculpting, and as the vulgar way of putting it has it, "there is a poke in each spoke."

75. *Mithun,* Sun Temple, Konark. Detail from one of the spokes in Plate No. 74 above.

76. A view of the Jagmohan Sun Temple, Konark; 13th century. *Nayikas* and *mithuns* adorn the walls.

77. A view of the Natya Mandir (Hall of Dancing), Southern Wall, Sun Temple, Konark; 13th century A.D. Canons of architecture required that *Nayikas*—young and beautiful damsels—be sculpted on the temple walls.

78. Yogi and Kanya, Sun Temple, Konark; 13th century A.D. The theme of the Ascetic and the Virgin has been discussed in the text and although this is a comparative grosser representation, at its spiritual best the two represent the Cosmic Romance, of Shiv, the Yogi, and his spouse, Parvati, daughter of the mountain Himalay.

79. Erotic Group, Sun Temple, Konark; 13th century. Kiss and embrace above, fellatio below; obviously a favourite motif; cf. plate 72.

80. Erotic Figures, Sún Temple, Konark (Museum); 13th century A.D. Cunnilingus. Note the radiance and poise of the figures heightened by the effect of the worn-out stone.

81. *Mithun*, Sun Temple, Konark; 13th century A.D. For sheer joy in love-making, the sculptures of Konark are unsurpassed.

82. *Mithun*, Sun Temple, Konark; 13th century A.D. Yet

another example of the ineffable bliss of the union and proof positive of the philosophic and religious interpretations.

83. *Mithun*, Sun Temple, Konark; 13th century A.D. Yet another example of the Philosophy of Mahasukh. Note the grace and joy and light which mark the countenances of the lovers.

84. Erotic Figures, Sun Temple, Konark; 13th century A.D. Showing the woman held upside down by the man, and cunnilingus.

85. Erotic figures, Sun Temple, Konark (Museum); 13th century. Showing lovers engaged in pre-coitus love play.

86. Erotic figure, Sun Temple, Konark; 13th century A.D. *Nayika* with a parrot; birds were often used for pecking and other aids to erotic excitement. Woman's breasts are highly sensitive erogenic centres.

87. *Mithun*, Sun Temple, Konark; 13th century A.D. Among the loveliest of Konark sculptures, this piece is remarkable for its chaste passion. Mark how desire and restraint are balanced in the pose which displays a sense of complete absorption of each in the other.

88. *Mithun*, Sun Temple, Konark; 13th century A.D. An effective study of abandon and delight.

89. Erotic figures, Sun Temple, Konark; 13th century A.D. This could be a study of co-wives and the husband or two female friends or companions having a gay time with the same man. At the highest reach of the philosophy of the Cult, the three chief divinities of the Hindu trinity could be represented as all males—gods; as all females goddesses; as two gods or a goddess, or as one god and two goddesses.

90. Damsel applying lac-dye, Parshvanath, Temple, Khajuraho; 10th century. The Temples of Khajuraho provide an array

of some of the most beautiful female figures.

91. Surasundari, Adinath Temple, Khajuraho. The temples of Khajuraho represent two types of beauty, slender with the angular face like this one, and the slightly plump with the full breasts—both ravishingly lovely so that neither excels the other.

92. Surasundari removing thorn, Kandariya Mahadev Temple, Khajuraho; 10th-11th century, A.D.

93. The Dancer, Parshvanath Temple, Khajuraho; 10th century A.D. A most beautiful study in the act of tying the *ghungroo.*

94. Woman with scorpian, Kandariya Mahadev Temple, Khajuraho; 11th century, A.D. Waiting for fulfilment of desire, the woman is oblivious of the scorpian which is moving up, or is the latter only an ornament?

95. Surasundari, Parshvanath Temple, Khajuraho, 10th century A.D. Though chastity belts were not unknown, that which is seen here is an artificial device for self-indulgence.

96. Erotic figures, Vishvanath Temple, Khajuraho; 11th century. Note the accurate-to-detail representation.

97. Lovers and a Monkey, Lakshman Temple, Khajuraho; 10th century.

98. *Mithun*, Devi Jagadamba Temple Khajuraho; 11th century A.D.

99. Erotic figures; Devi Jagadamba Temple, Khajuraho; 11th Century A.D. The Erotic sculptures of Khajuraho may be divided into four distinct categories, pertaining to (1) passion and ecstasy, (2) sophisticated tastes and cultivated abnormalities, (3) sexo-yogic poses and (4) orgies. This belongs to No. 2.

100. *Mithun*, Chitragupt Temple, Khajuraho ; 11th century, A.D. Passion and Ecstasy.

101. *Mithun*, Devi Jagadamba Temple, Khajuraho ; 11th century A.D. 'Passion and Ecstasy'. Devi Jagdamba Temple has been

characterised by some critics as the temple 'dedicated to the arts of love'. But at Khajuraho, several temples may be so labelled ; the Kandariya Mahadev, for instance, offers far richer treasures in this field.

102. Bands of sculptures. Kandariya Mahadev Temple, Khajuraho; 11th century A.D. The central panels carry sexo-yogic poses.

103. Erotic figures, Vishvanath Temple; 11th century A.D. The attendants—friends of the female?—play different roles in different four-some groups of this kind. Here, they pretend that they see nothing, know nothing.

104. *Mithun*, Kandariya Mahadev Temple, Khajuraho; 11th century A.D. The *Yogi-and-Kanya* theme. Compare with 103 and notice the difference in approach and activity of the attendants.

105. *Mithun*, Vishvanath Temple, Khajuraho ; 11th century A.D. 'The unnatural'—one attendant pretends to be so shocked that she would not look upon such perversion.

106. *Mithun*, Kandariya Mahadev Temple, Khajuraho; 11th century A.D. Sexo-yogic pose. Several interpretations are offered for the three-women and one-man theme: attendants, friends, co-wives of the central figure. The other two females are regarded, in the highest sense, as the two other chief goddesses.

107. Erotic figures, Vishvanath Temple, Khajuraho; 11th century A.D. A Sexo-yogic pose similar to the one in plate 106 from Kandariya Mahadev.

108. Detail from Erotic frieze, Lakshman Temple, Khajuraho; 10th century A.D. Origiastic activity: Fellatio and Cunnilingus. Notice the grin of impish delight on the face of the figure standing on the left.

109. Erotic frieze, Lakshman Temple, Khajuraho; 10th century A.D. An orgy depicting sexual activity of all manner, arranged around the couch in the centre.

110. to 112. Portions and Details from Erotic friezes, Lakshman Temple, Khajuraho; 10th century A.D. Compare these with erotic friezes from Belgavi, Plates 41-46, and mark the absence of animals.

113. Bands of sculpture, Vaman Temple, Khajuraho; 11th century A.D. showing celebrated "double tier of naked apsaras in a celestial chorus, vaunting their voluptuous charms in an infinite variety of attitudes, displaying a languid and calculated eroticism" (Rowland).

114. Divine Lovers, Parshvanath Temple, Khajuraho; 10th century A.D. Observe the mingling of the sensual and the 'spiritual' creating a 'chaste sensuousness.' The mirror is the Mirror of Illusion.

115. Celestial nymph, Parshvanath Temple, Ranakpur; late medievel, 15th century A.D. Full breast, thin waist, and broad hips conform to the Indian ideal of feminine beauty.

116. Erotic figures, Parshvanath Temple, Ranakpur; 15th century A.D. Note the effect of 'undressing' created in stone.

117. Erotic figures, Parshvanath Temple, Ranakpur; 15th century A.D. ; The *Mithun* on the right is an excellent study of passion and frenzy.

118. Erotic frieze, Chow-mukh Temple, Ranakpur; 15th century A.D. Orgiastic activity as in erotic friezes elsewhere.

119. Detail of 118 ; an animal, a goat is in use.

120. Erotic frieze, Chow-mukh, Temple Ranakpur. Another specimen of orgiastic activity so typical of erotic friezes.

121. Detail of 120 ; showing amazing patterns of group-satisfaction.

122. *Mithun*, Amba Durga Temple, Jagat Village, Udaipur, Rajasthan; late medieval.

123. *Mithun*, Jagdish Temple, Udaipur; 16th-17th century A.D.

124. Erotic frieze, Jagdish Temple, Udaipur. Extremely, clean for

a frieze, this marks the end of the movement. The 'monk-figures' are unconvincing.

125. *Mithun*, Eklingnath Temple (near Udaipur), Rajasthan, 15th century A.D.

126. *Mithun*, Eklingnath Temple. Another sample from the celebrated Rajasthan shrine.

Plates 1 to 67 are reproduced by courtesy of the Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi. Photographs for plates 68 to 126 were taken by Shri Darshan Lall.

PLATES



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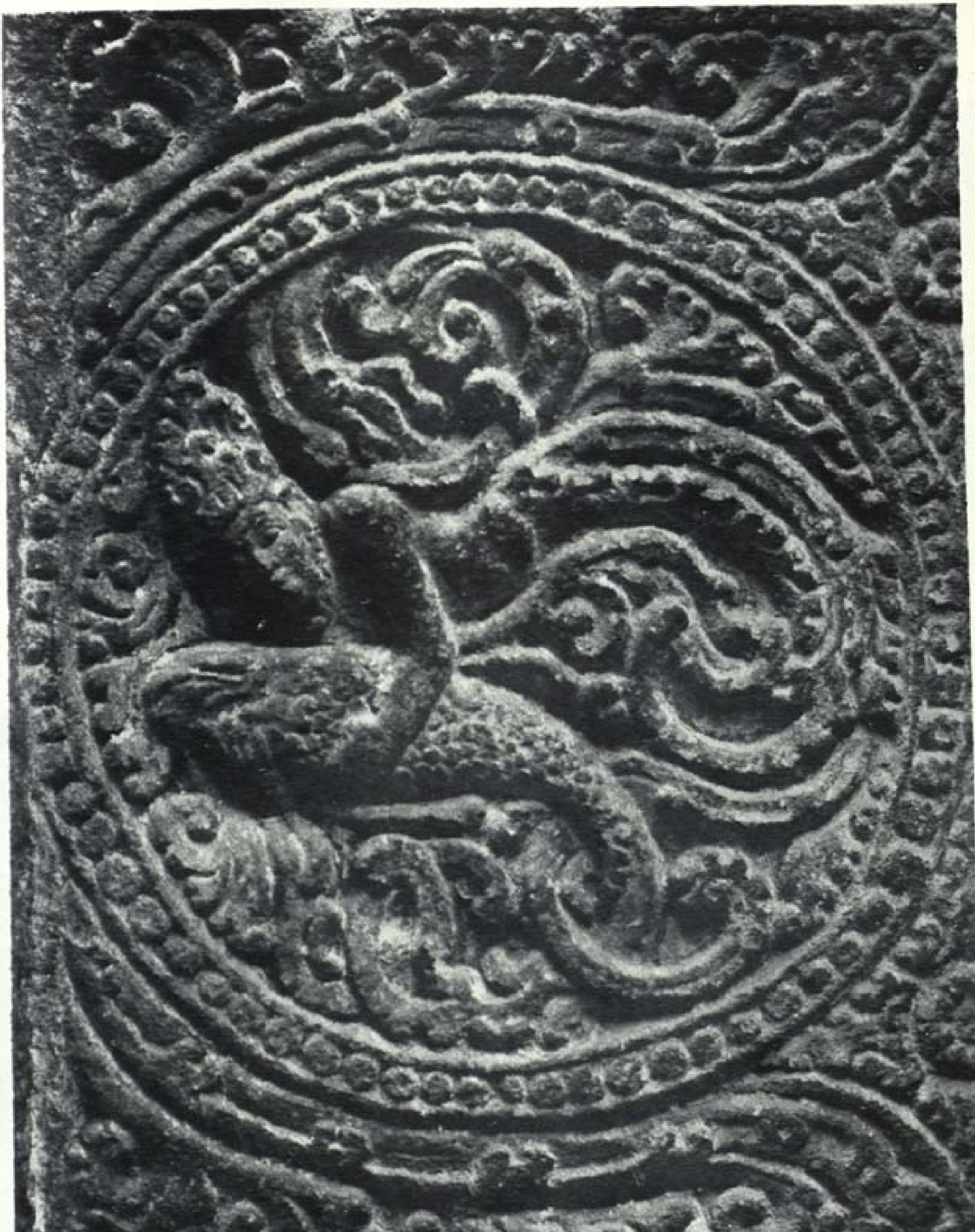
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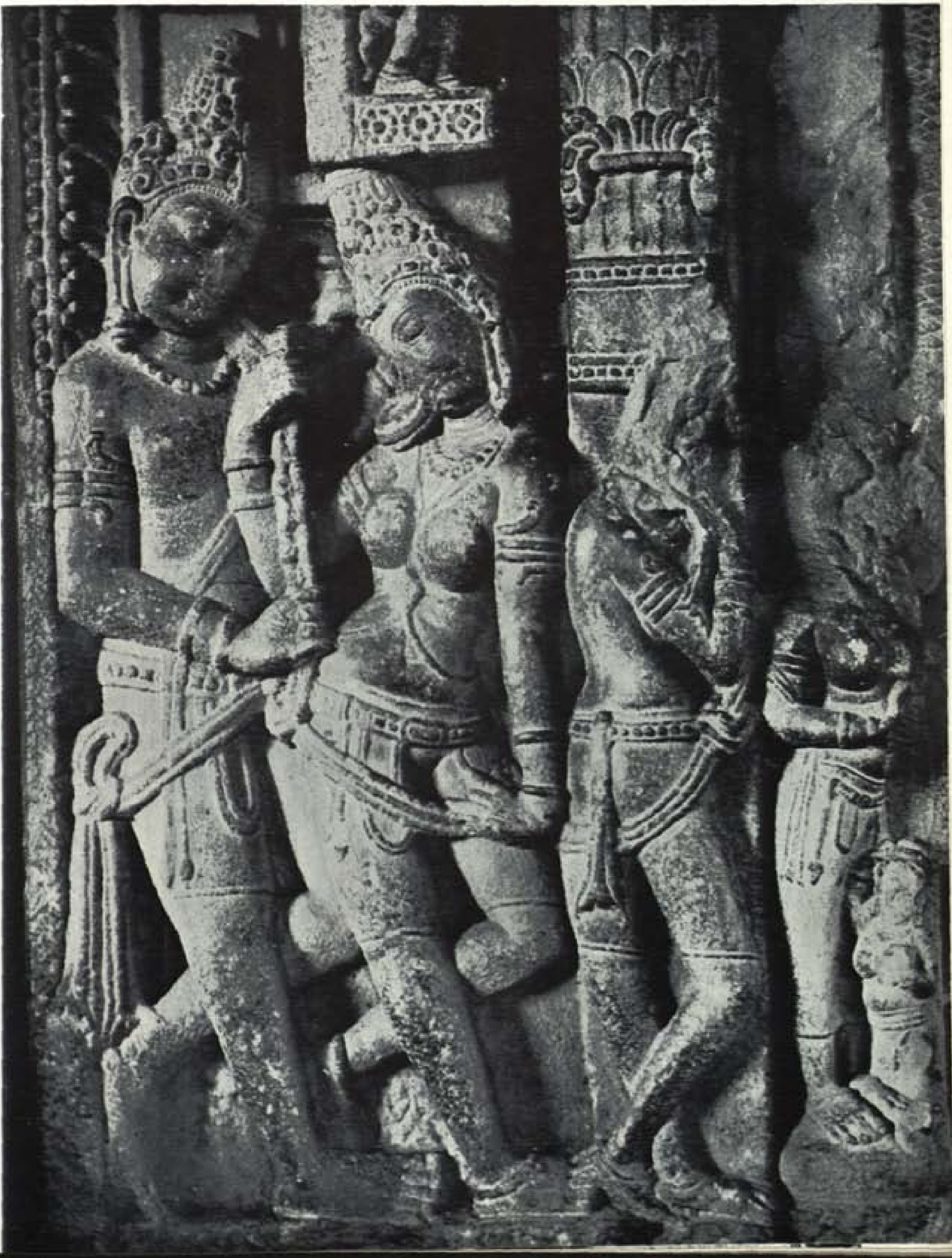




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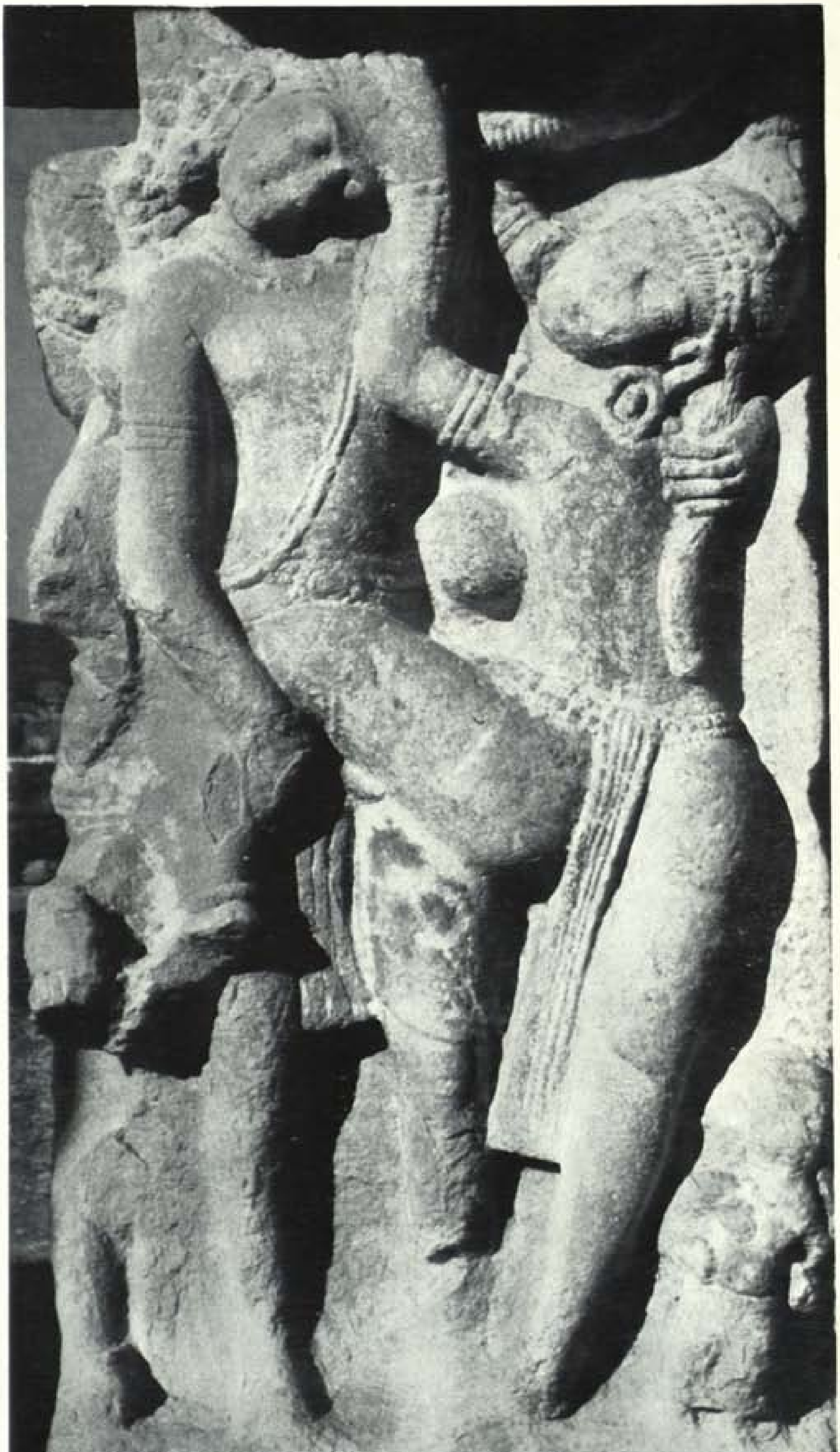


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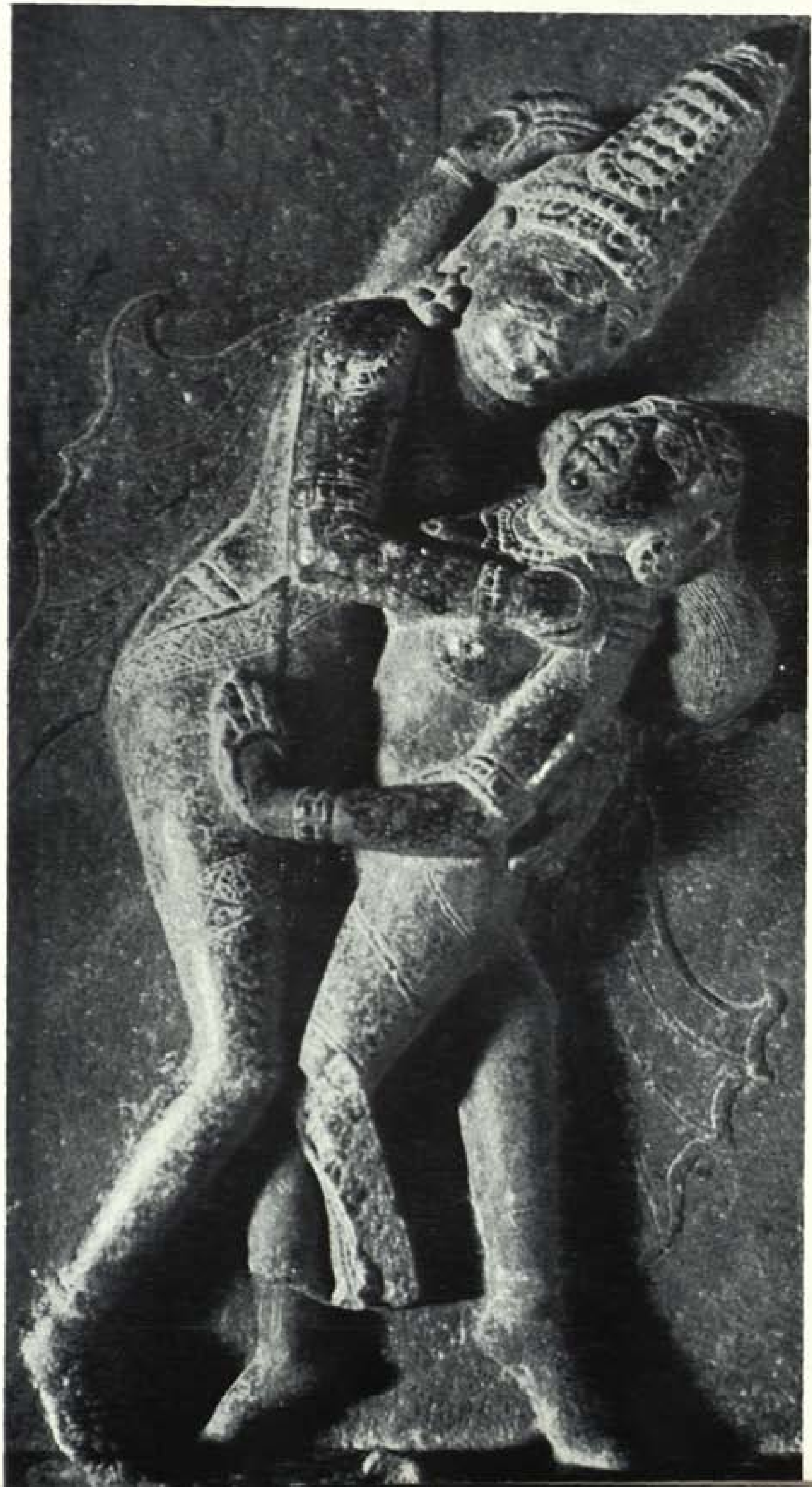
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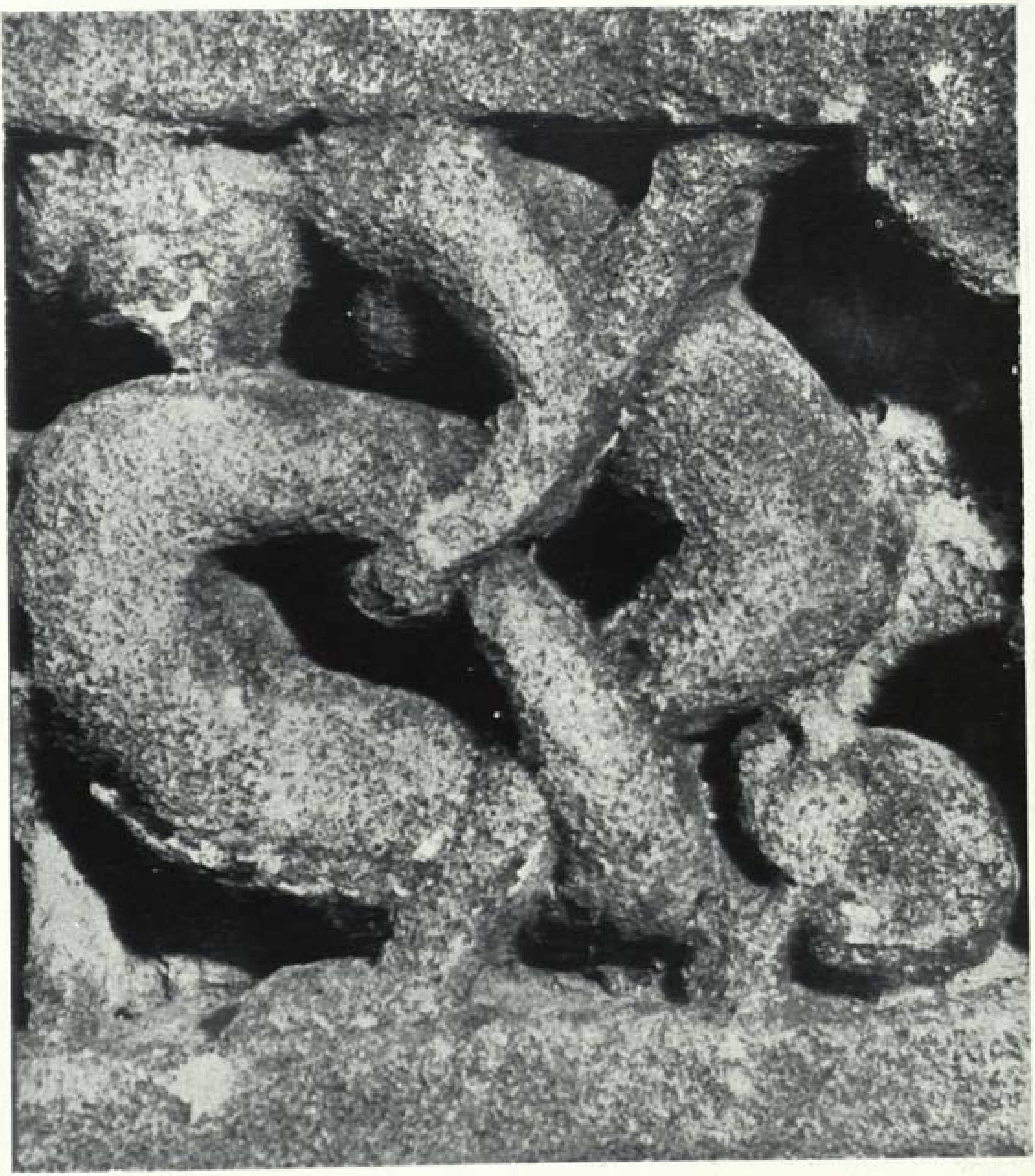


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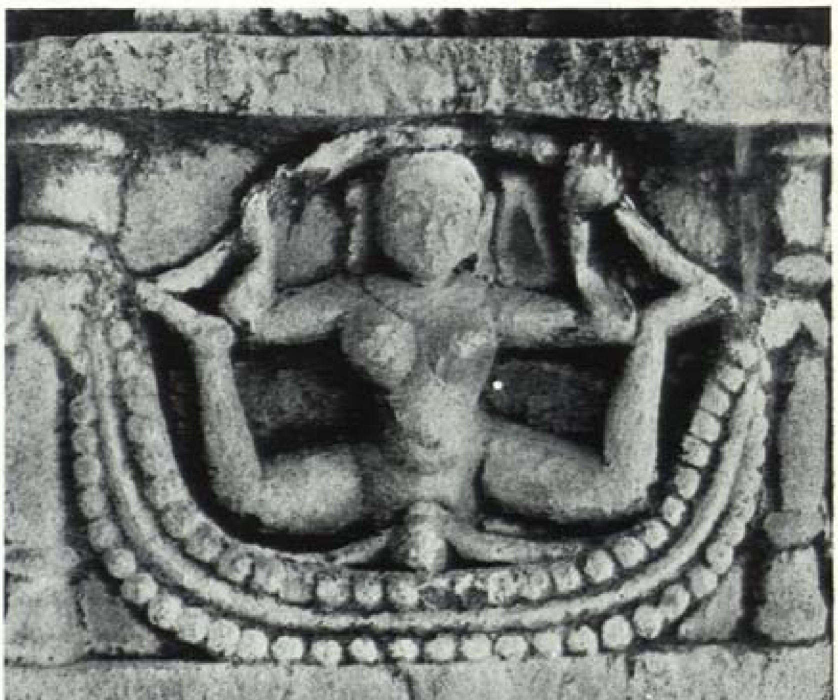


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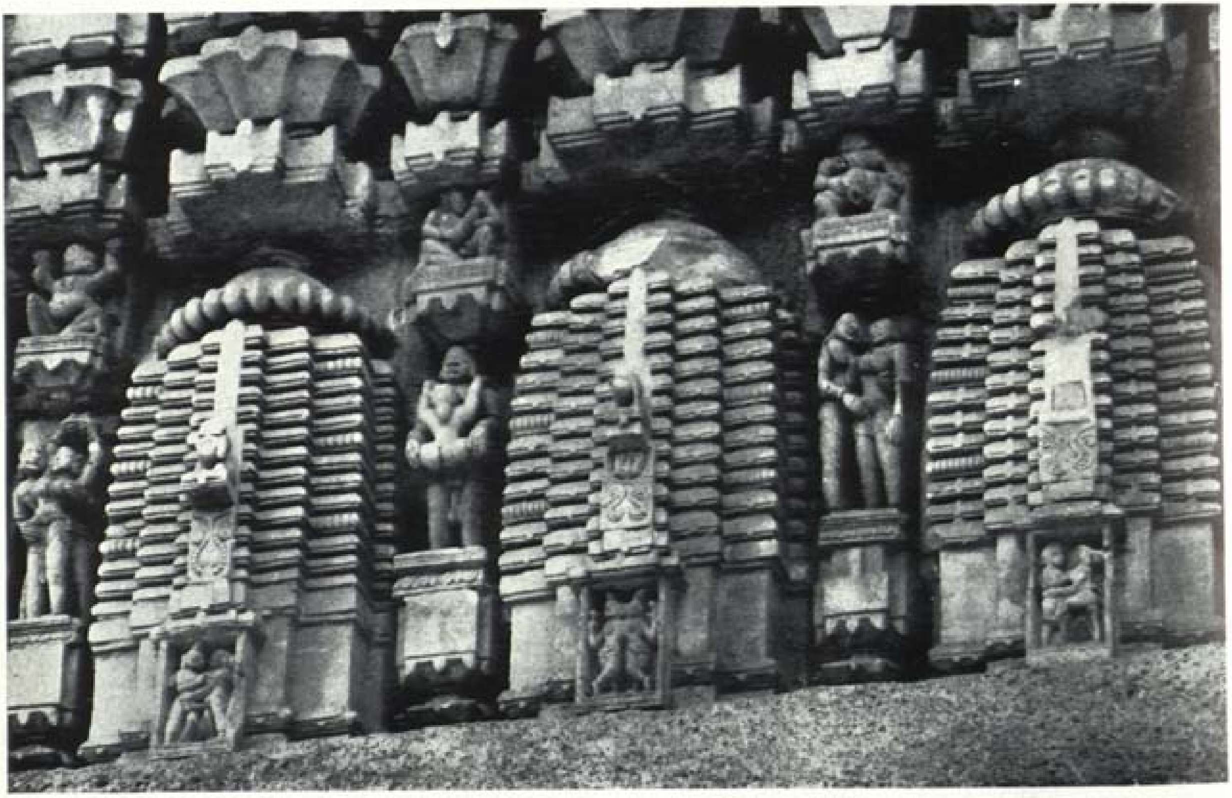
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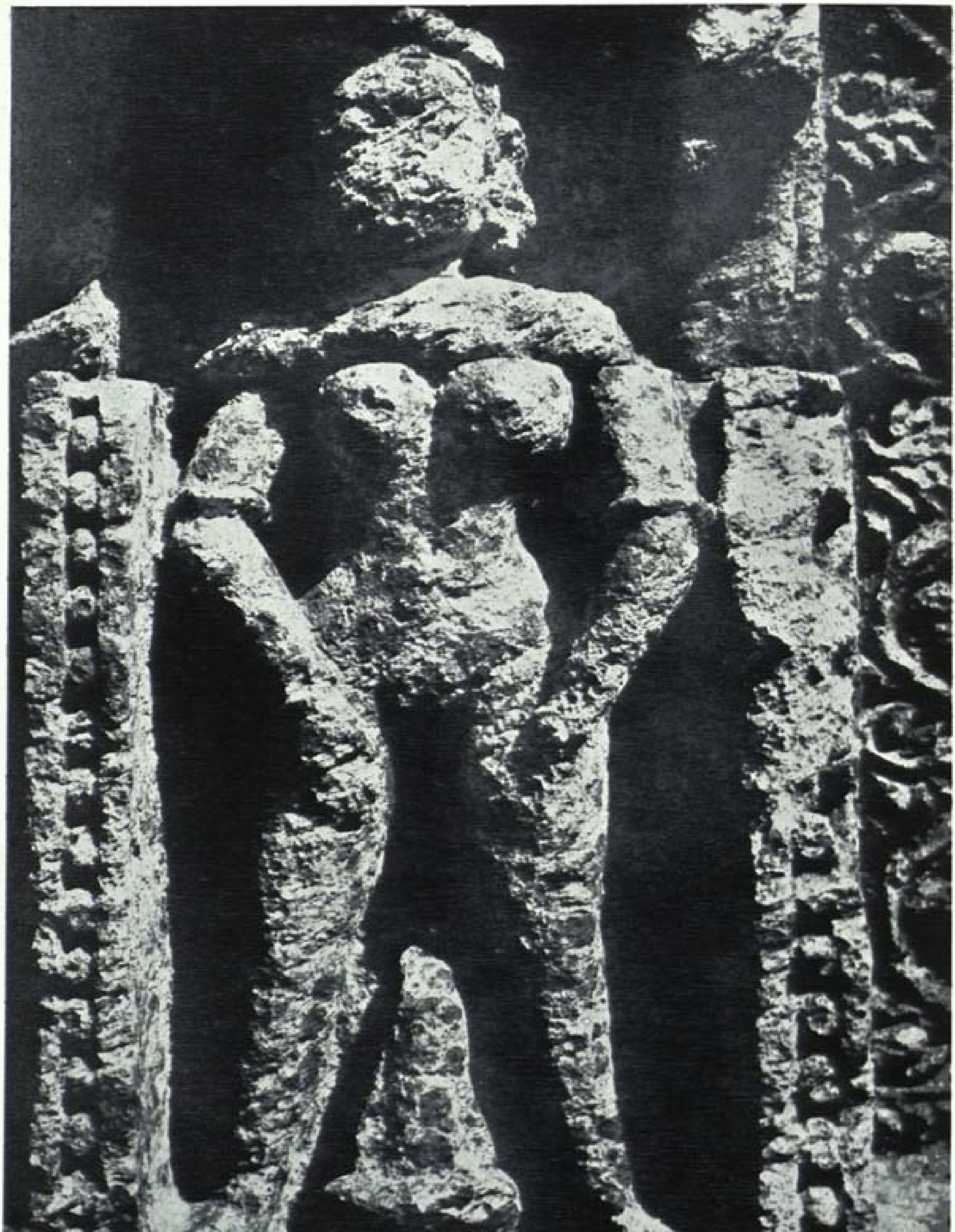


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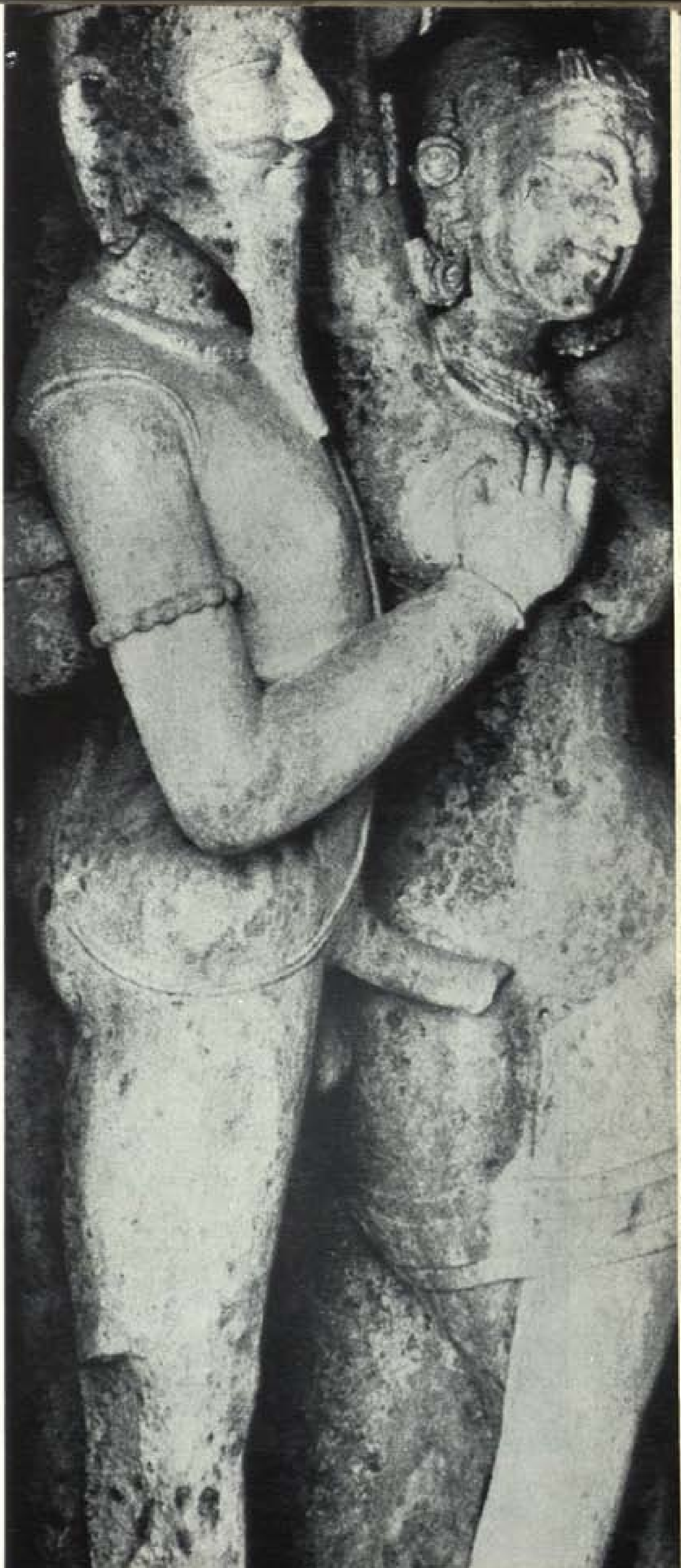
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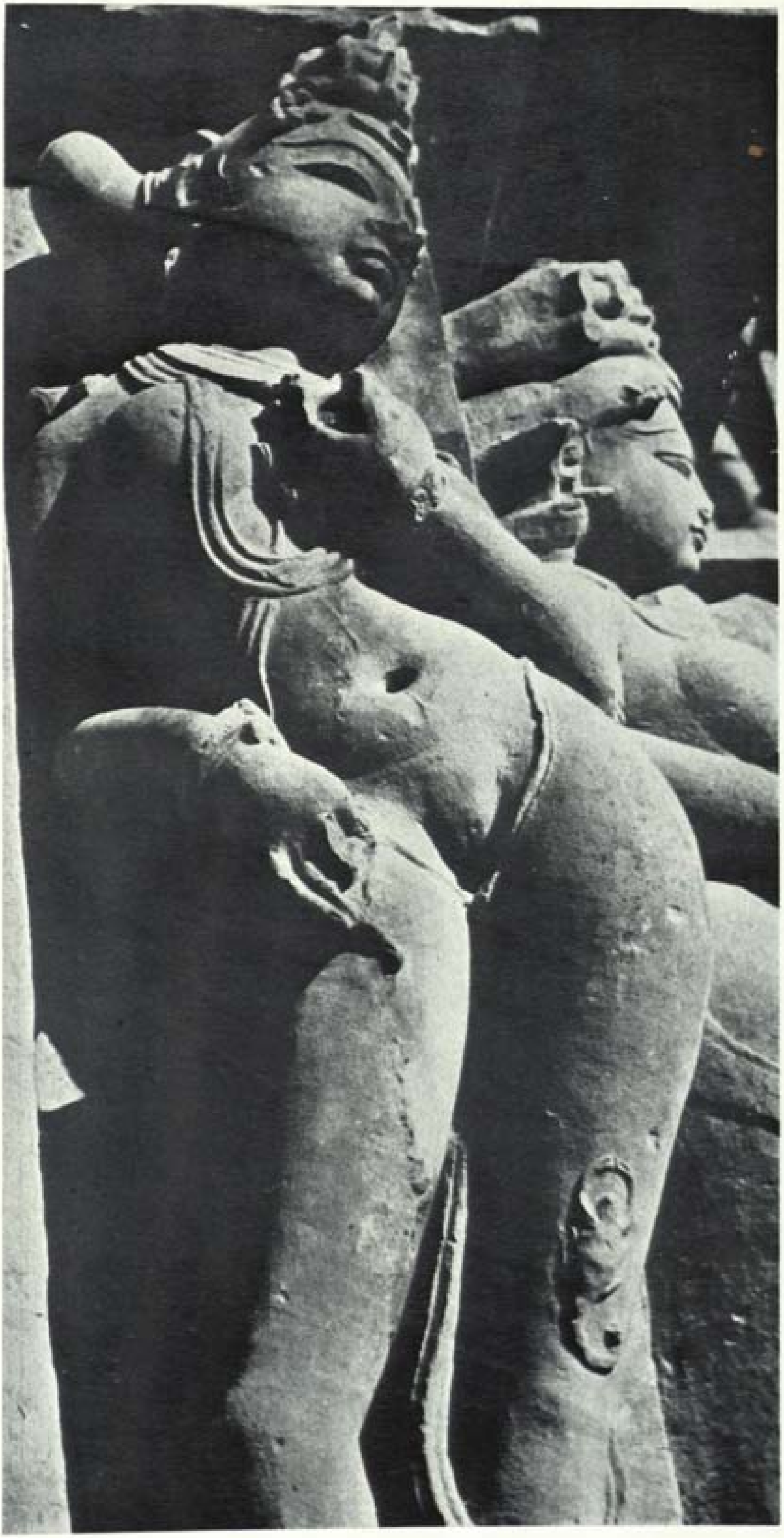








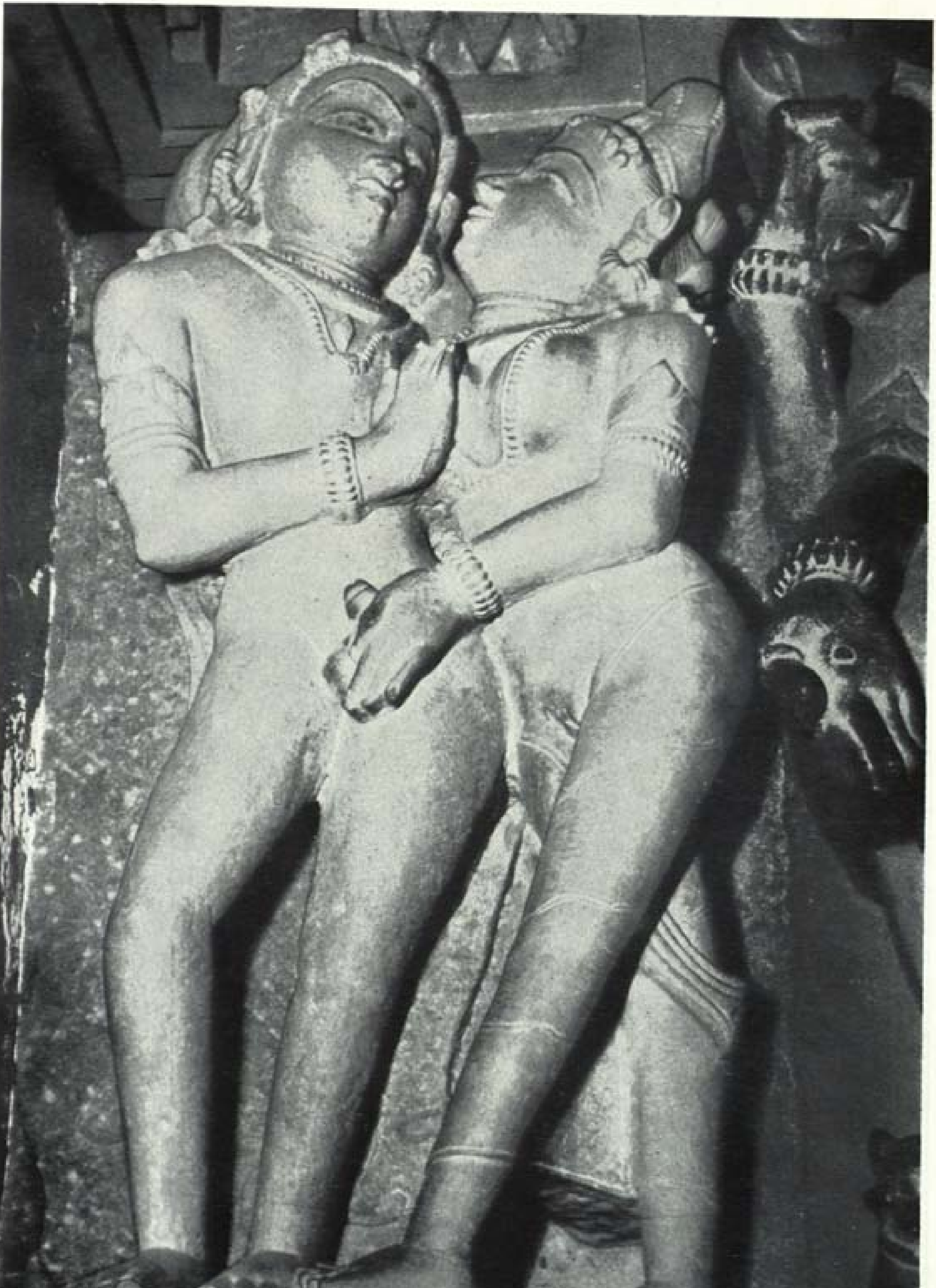
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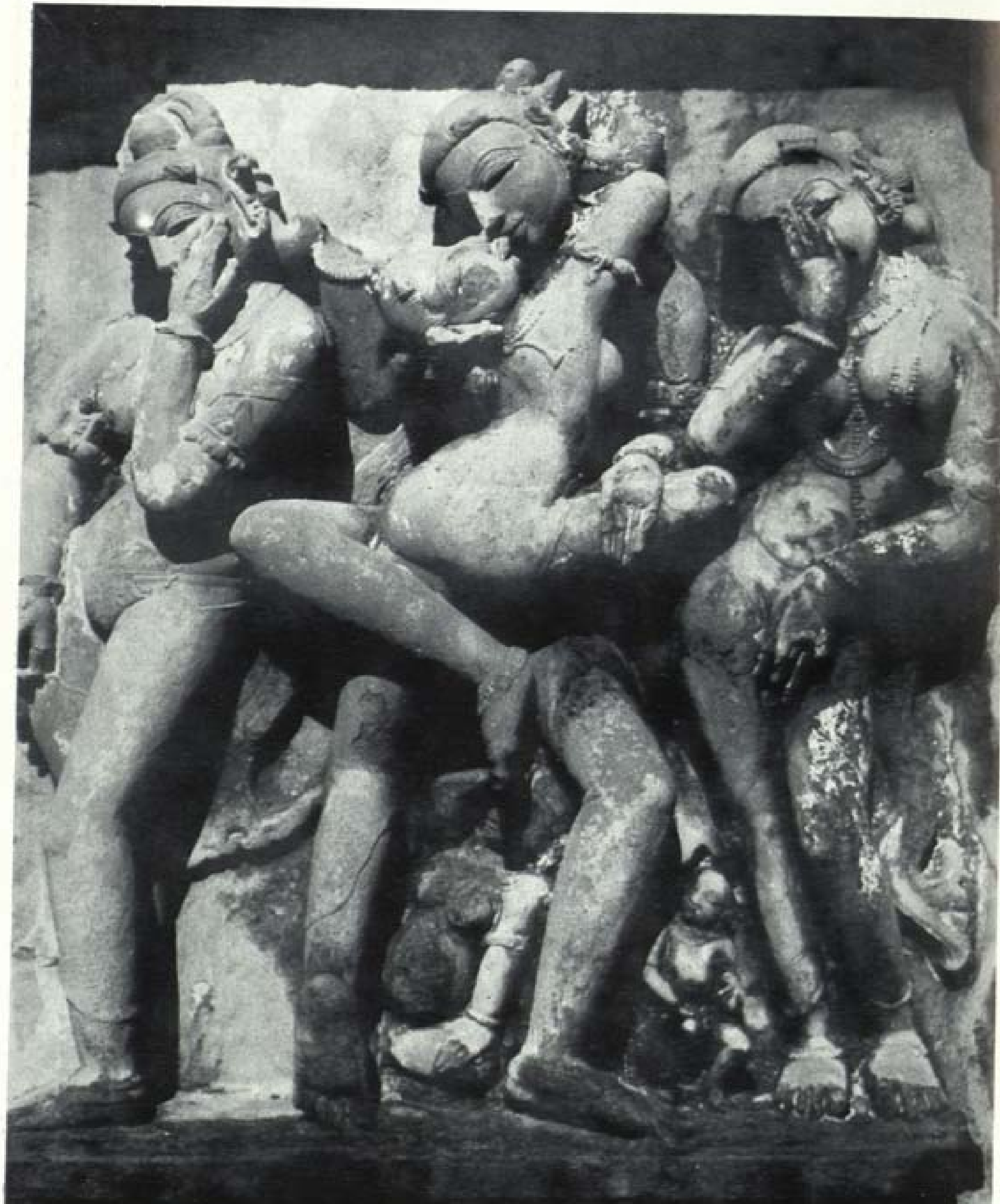


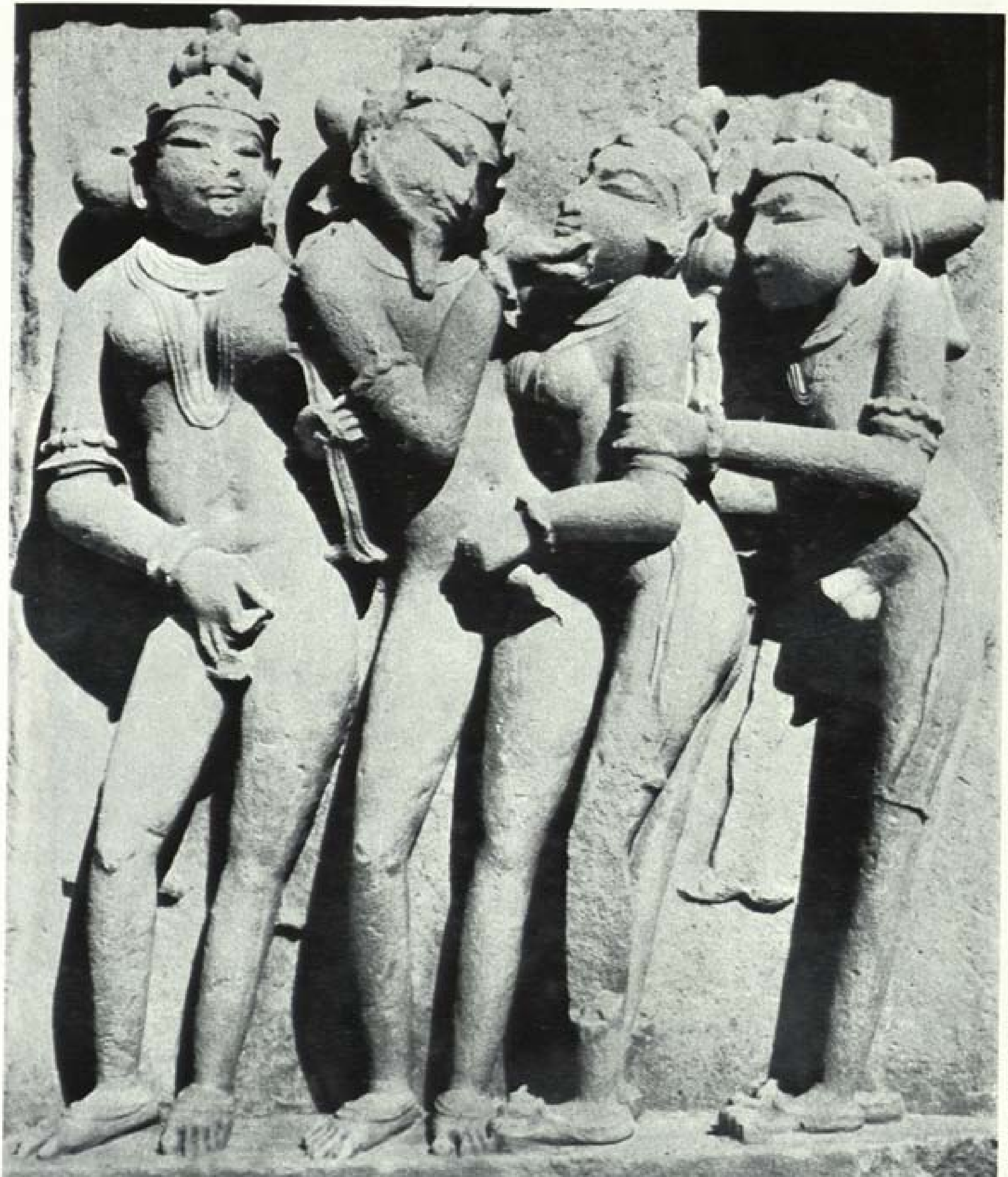
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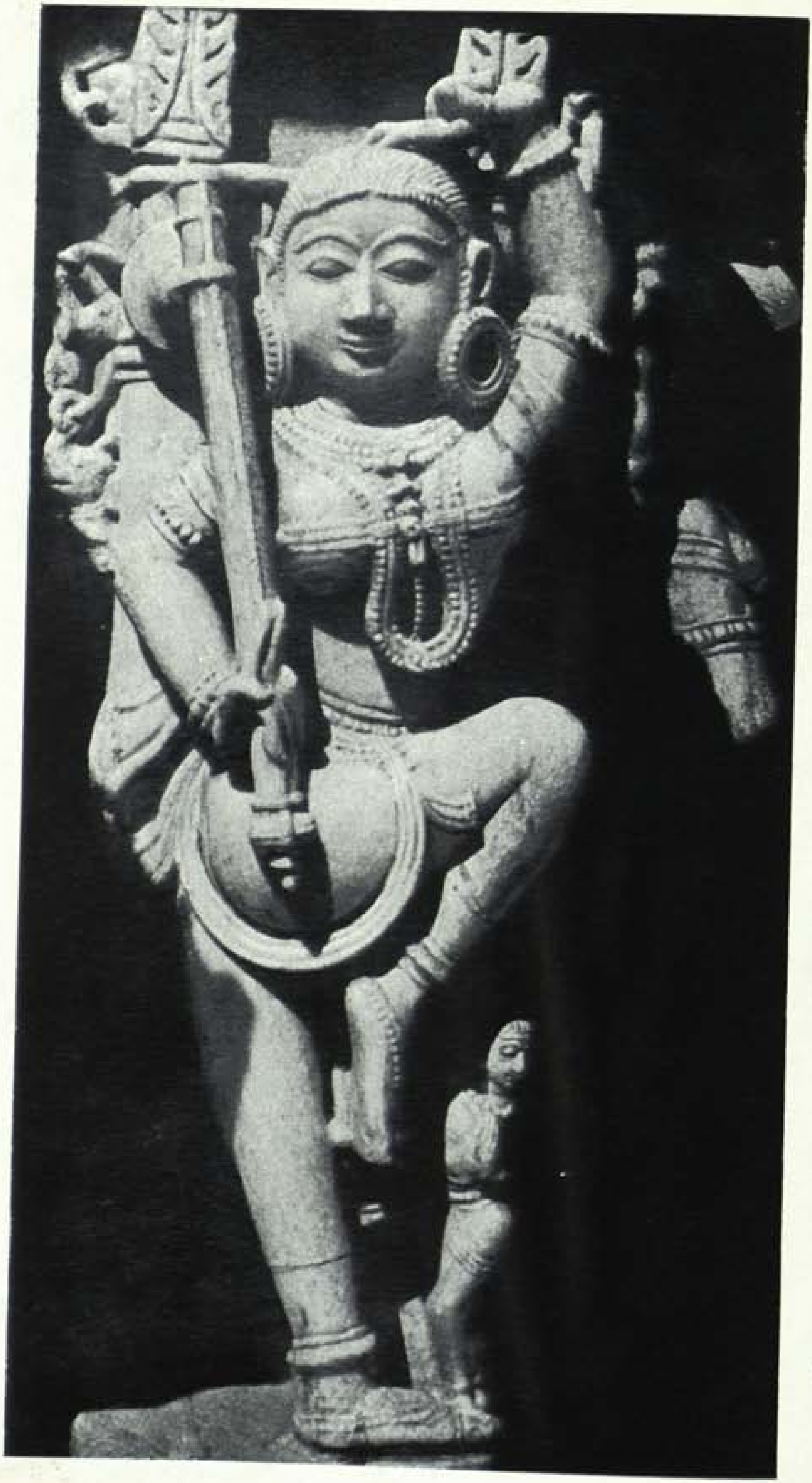


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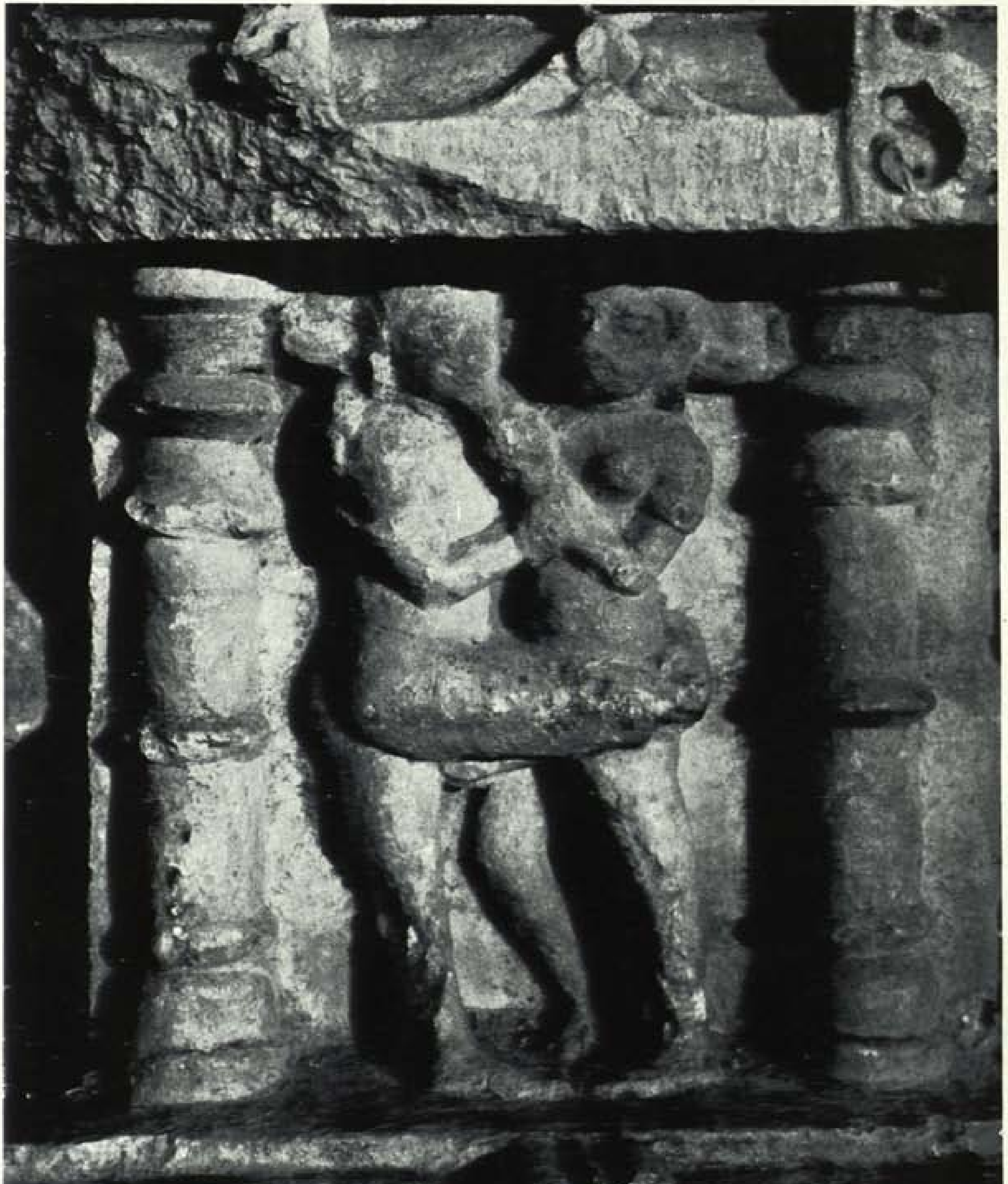
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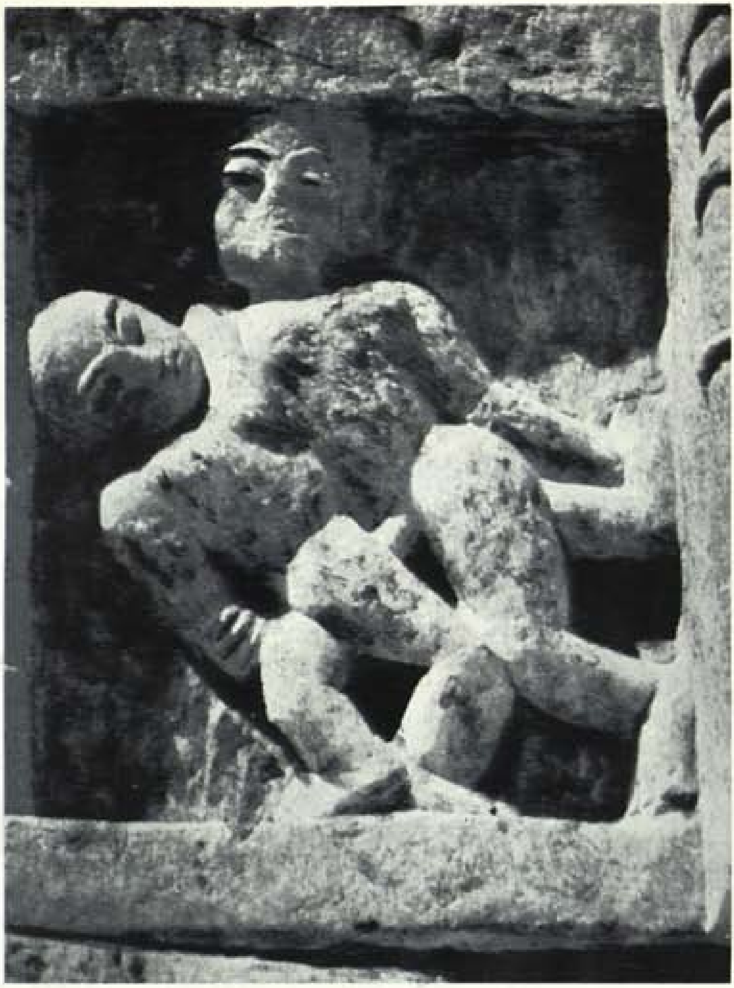
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